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Performing 21st-Century Girlhood:
Girls, Postfeminist Discourse, and the Disney Star Machine

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Performing 21st-Century Girlhood:
Girls, Postfeminist Discourse, and the Disney Star Machine

by

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Dedication

To all the girls and girl allies who light up the world by being themselves.

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Performing 21st-Century Girlhood:
Girls, Postfeminist Discourse, and the Disney Star Machine

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"Performing 21st-Century Girlhood: Girls, Postfeminist Discourse, and the Disney Star Machine," explores the economic and discursive functions of contemporary girlhood within Disney Channel's talent-driven transmedia franchises. Ideological, discursive, and narrative textual analyses of Disney Channel programs and paratexts are augmented by examination of the corporate motives and dominant discourses reproduced by Disney personnel in annual reports and in popular and trade publications referencing Disney's stars and girl-driven franchises. This exploration of girls' visibility as Disney performers, media producers, and public citizens brings several disciplines into conversation with one another, addressing issues in girls' cultural studies, media industries scholarship, celebrity studies, and theories of postfeminism. I take an intersectional feminist and critical cultural studies approach to media texts and meaning-making, with particular attention to power relations and cultural contexts. The political and economic aspects of this research demand that I also work to illuminate the significance of media industry logics within the production

and distribution of media for girl audiences. I argue that the Walt Disney Company has a vested interest in reproducing certain postfeminist and subjectifying discourses of girlhood, which have become integral to its success in an ever-expanding web of media and consumer markets. While Disney Channel's girl-driven franchises constitute the case studies, my analysis reaches beyond the clear focus on gender and age to theorize girls' increasing visibility in the context of contemporary consumer culture and issues of postracism, citizenship, subjectification, and agency—issues that require continued interrogation as Disney distributes and expands its franchise properties globally.

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Introduction

In May 2010, when Hollywood Records, a U.S. record label owned by Disney Music Group, a subsidiary of the Walt Disney Company, released Miley Cyrus' first music video for the title song of her latest studio album, *Can't Be Tamed*, tabloids, trades, entertainment blogs, and other news outlets discussed it as a premeditated career shift for Cyrus that could have negative consequences for her "Disneyfied" image in the eyes of her legions of tween girl fans (and their parents). Reactions in the popular press position the performance in direct opposition to Cyrus' work on Disney Channel where she had played Miley Stewart, a "normal" girl transplanted from Tennessee to California to pursue her secret pop career as Hannah Montana. One Huffington Post headline questions whether the video is "Too Sexy, Or Age Appropriate?" while CBS News compares it to her "earlier more wholesome videos" (including those in which she performs as Hannah Montana), and NY Daily News constructs a clear, if extreme, dichotomy between Hannah Montana and this new Miley Cyrus, stating that "Hannah Montana may not be extinct yet, but Miley Cyrus is doing everything she can to kill her Disney alter-ego dead" ("Miley Cyrus 'Can't…"; "Miley Cyrus Grows Up"; Roberts).

Such responses perpetuate fixed dichotomies that pigeonhole contemporary U.S. girls as either sexual or innocent, based on taboos about childhood sexuality and female desire. But these reactions overlook the social, economic, and cultural formations that help to determine girls' representations and public interpretations of their meaning(s). Such reactions raise questions about girls' sexual subjectivity, visibility, maturity, and

embodiment that fixed dichotomies cannot begin to answer. But, by firmly positioning Cyrus' pop music career in relation to her Disney Channel vehicle, these reactions hint at avenues for discussion that might extend beyond the realm of individualized controversy to examine the powerful economic forces at work in Disney's investment in girls' subjectification.

In the wake of its successful multi-platform franchise efforts based on the *Lizzie McGuire* (Minsky et al. 2001-2004) series, followed by the wildly popular made-for-TV movie *High School Musical* (Ortega 2006) and *Hannah Montana* (Poryes and Peterman 2006-2011) series, the Walt Disney Company churns out potential new "tween" girl stars at increased frequency, including Selena Gomez, Demi Lovato, Bridgit Mendler, Zendaya Coleman, and China Anne McClain, all of whom have starred in Disney Channel sitcoms since 2007, appear in Disney Original Movies, and are currently signed to Disney's Hollywood Records. The Walt Disney Company generates performances of girlhood by promoting one girl performer after another in its attempts to both reflect and influence the culture of girls in their audiences. What, then, can be said about Disney's relationship to "tween" and adolescent girlhoods? How does the Walt Disney Company leverage girls' performances to attract girl audiences? And what is at stake for contemporary notions of girlhood in the re/production of certain girl stars, white-privileging girl-centered brand franchises, and idealized representations of contemporary girlhood within the context of colorblind ideology, postfeminist discourse, and the neoliberal capitalist imperatives of such a massive media conglomerate as Disney? Taking these questions into consideration, this dissertation asks: How might

performances of particularly racialized, sexualized, classed, and feminized postfeminist contemporary girlhoods function, both discursively and economically, for the Walt Disney Company?

From the perspective of media industries scholarship, as well as through discursive and ideological textual analysis of representations of girlhood, this dissertation examines the ways in which the Walt Disney Company—specifically Disney Channel—has constructed and maintained girls as entertainers and as audience members in the U.S., since the company's expansion of original television production in the late 1990s. Since the late 1980s in the U.S., neoliberalism and postfeminist discourses have created a context in which a sexualized, young, and feminine appearance is privileged for women and girls of all ages, and in which they are hailed primarily as consumers whose power, agency, and desire as subjects are constructed in direct relation to the policing and maintenance of the heterosexualized feminine body. While women and girls have long been sexualized in popular media in developed countries, there seems to have been a shift in how and where that sexualization manifests. Rather than theorize girls' increasing sexual objectification, it becomes necessary to examine the complexities between the subject and performances of self-objectification. In this way, one can theorize girls' agency in processes of "subjectification" manifested in contemporary media representations (Gill *Gender* 255)—especially as it occurs more frequently in media targeting girl audiences, such as Disney Channel's *Hannah Montana*, starring Miley Cyrus. This dissertation explores representations of girlhood in three Disney Channel series—*Hannah Montana, That's So Raven* (Poryes et al. 2003-2007), and *Wizards of*

Waverly Place (Greenwald et al. 2007-2012) in terms of postfeminist and post-racial discourses and works to position the shows' stars—Miley Cyrus, Raven-Symoné, and Selena Gomez—as useful celebrity case studies for better understanding the relationships between postfeminist discourses, contemporary girlhood, media conglomeration, agency, and celebrity culture. Specifically, the first two chapters of this project focus on issues of representation, while the latter two foreground girl-driven initiatives by the Walt Disney Company and celebrity girls' roles as promotional spokespersons, celebrity activists, media producers, and business moguls. Each of the four chapters incorporates discussion of the various ways in which Disney divisions and individual personnel envision tween audiences and stars, as well as discussions of how stars navigate celebrity culture in relation to the particular sites of representation and cultural struggle under interrogation.

This project addresses gaps in scholarship by interrogating how girls' visibility as both media consumers and performers relates to shifting constructions of girlhood in the context of contemporary postfeminist discourse in U.S. culture. Few scholars have theorized the particular role of girlhood within postfeminist discourse, the influence(s) of visibility and celebrity culture on cotemporary notions of girlhood and performativity, or the roles of girl stars and audiences in the economic undergirding of media conglomerates. Because contemporary discourses of girlhood and performances of girlhood in the U.S. are intricately bound up in issues of visibility and may be infinitely reproduced by media industries, it is necessary to explore girlhood both from the perspective of media as an industry as well as through textual analysis. The sections that follow describe the development of Disney Channel and girl-focused television, before

exploring how this dissertation theorizes girlhood, girls' media culture, and postfeminist discourse.

DISNEY CHANNEL AND THE TWEEN GIRL MARKET

The Walt Disney Company's work to promote and manage young female stars and the cultural implications such work may have for girls and constructions of girlhood are relatively unexplored areas of scholarship. In addition, few studies have focused attention on Disney's television practices since the 1950s. In her collection of essays on another children's television network—Nickelodeon—Heather Hendershot points out that

> there is a striking lack of emphasis on individual television producers or production companies like Nickelodeon. While film scholars have given us portraits of specific studios and directors, television scholars have focused less on specific 'auteurs' (individual or corporate). ("Introduction" 4)

Moreover, there has been some scholarship on television for children and teens, but few researchers have analyzed the roles of girl stars and audiences in the economic undergirding of contemporary media conglomerates. As such, the literature on these topics is severely limited. Below, I have attempted to draw together research that speaks to the formation of media franchises around girl stars and audiences as well as the role of teen and tween target markets in media production. I begin with a brief exploration of the Walt Disney Company's early involvement in television, followed by a discussion of girl-focused television produced by Disney and other networks and a discussion of the logics of transmedia franchising.

The Walt Disney Company and Television

As televisions appeared in U.S. homes nationwide in the 1950s, the Walt Disney Company found ways to generate and capitalize on relationships with networks to finance and promote a new theme park and to generate consumer audiences for texts and products old and new. Disney was one of a few established studios that, along with some independent producers, took the opportunity to produce series for television early on, successfully influencing the structure of television production and reception to meet the needs of the studio. According to Chris Anderson, "Disney provided the impulse for the major studios to enter television and a blueprint for the future development of the media industries" (*Hollywood* 31). Its original series for ABC, *Disneyland* (which aired on ABC, NBC, CBS, and The Disney Channel, respectively, in various forms and under various titles from 1954-2008), worked as a vehicle not only for the promotion of the Disneyland theme park, but for interweaving the mythology of the park as "Walt's Dream," with that of family-focused educational and moral values that would continue to permeate its kid-friendly films and television programs for decades. For J.P. Telotte, Disney's early series "helped pave the way for an even bolder, more ambitious development—the company's move into cable television, first with the Disney Channel and later with TOON Disney, ESPN, and other channels" (82). After decades of providing major networks with original programming and films, Disney began broadcasting via its own subscription-based premium cable network, The Disney Channel, in 1983.

In her overview of the array of investments and activities that constituted the company's shifting priorities and intense diversification and expansion throughout the

last two decades of the twentieth century, Janet Wasko details the level of power and control held by the company's shareholders and board members in her book *Understanding Disney: the Manufacture of Fantasy* (2001). Changes in ownership and management at the Walt Disney Company in the early 1980s had reinvigorated the company and precipitated significantly increasing revenues, assets, and stock prices. The successes of "Team Disney," led by new CEO Michael Eisner, would compel the company to dub the following decade (the 1990s), "The Disney Decade." With an emphasis on forming corporate partnerships, diversifying expansion, limiting their exposure, and generating corporate synergy, among other strategies, Team Disney's primary objective was "to create shareholder value" (Wasko 37). Part of Team Disney's strategy included launching Touchstone Television to produce and supply programming to all the major networks while distinguishing its more adult-oriented offerings from the Disney-branded children's media for which the company was best known. Throughout the 1980s, The Disney Channel offered a shifting array of programming, for children and family audiences, but never in the ad-supported format used by other networks. In 1991, cable providers began to offer The Disney Channel as part of their expanded basic cable packages, though the transition would take years, with some providers in certain markets requiring premium subscriptions until as recently as 2004.

Since the 1980s, media corporations have expanded through vertical and horizontal integration across national borders, such that the globalization of production and distribution has determined which companies now dominate (Schaap 151). According to Thomas Schatz, as early as 1986, home video and subscription-based cable

television markets began to provide greater revenues for media companies than they could expect from their films' theatrical releases (Schatz "The New" 196). As new modes of exhibition and distribution have emerged and synergistic franchising strategies have extended the lives of media texts to multiple iterations across media platforms, six massive conglomerates (the "Big Six": Viacom, Time Warner, Comcast/General Electric, the Walt Disney Company, News Corporation, and the Sony Corporation of America) continue to control the markets for commercial television and film production, distribution, and licensing.

Among its innumerable ventures, Team Disney aggressively developed markets for its home video products and non-Disney branded films during the 1980s, reinvigorated its animated features business with merchandise and Broadway productions, intensified licensing of Disney characters and the manufacture of branded consumer products, and branched out further into television, radio, and music publishing with the Capital Cities/ABC takeover in 1995. After suffering losses throughout the early 1990s, the company took over Capital Cities/ABC, becoming the world's largest media company. In 1996, Eisner hired Anne Sweeney, who had worked at Nick Jr., Nickelodeon's programming block for two- to six-year-olds, to oversee Disney's television ventures as President of The Disney Channel Worldwide and ABC Cable Networks Group. Her goal was to make Disney Channel a stronger brand in relation to other Disney holdings as well as to its children's television competitors, Nickelodeon and The Cartoon Network (Boorstin "Disney's 'Tween Machine'"). To that end, she focused

on offering programming that would attract the coveted tween (9-14-year-old) audience that Disney had yet to successfully address (Boorstin "Disney's 'Tween Machine'").

During the late 1990s, Disney Channel made several changes, dropping "The" from its title, adopting an updated logo, and adding programming breaks for promotional spots—though not sponsored advertisements—between shows. In addition, the schedule was split into three blocks of programming: Zoog Disney in the afternoons and evenings, devoted to programming for teens and tweens; Vault Disney, broadcasting classic Disney series; and Playhouse Disney, for pre-school audiences. It was then, specifically for the Zoog Disney block, that Disney Channel began to offer its first original live-action series for teens with *Flash Forward* (1996-1997) and *The Famous Jett Jackson* (1998-2001), and for tweens with *Even Stevens* (2000-2003) and *Lizzie McGuire* (2001-2004), in addition to an array of music videos and pop stars' concert performance broadcasts. As Disney's original programming drew a larger tween and teen audience, the music videos were replaced by tween-oriented videos featuring songs from Disney films, such as those in which the casts of several popular Disney Channel series perform together as the Disney Channel Circle of Stars, singing well-known songs from Disney's *Cinderella* (1950, song: "A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes") and *The Lion King* (1994, song: The Circle of Life"), among others. Concert broadcasts were limited to those by artists such as Britney Spears, whose romance-themed songs were oriented more toward teen audiences, Hilary Duff, whose music had launched Hollywood Records' success by appealing to tweens, and others who had appeared on Disney Channel, signed recording contracts with Disney Music Group (Hollywood Records, Walt Disney Records), or were

featured on Radio Disney, which launched in 1996. As Mike Budd comments, "Every Disney product is both a commodity and an ad for every other Disney commodity" (Budd 1; Giroux and Pollock 84).

The Walt Disney Company has a long history of promoting its own products, stars, artists, and texts across multiple platforms over and above all other advertising. Other networks have also cross-promoted media content for young audiences by connecting music, music performance, and films through television programming. For example, Paramount Pictures made a hit out of its film *Flashdance* in 1983 by marketing its choreographed music video like sequences and songs on the young adult- and teen-oriented network MTV, which had launched just two years prior (Doherty 194). And, nearly two decades later, the WB network began licensing popular music to enhance niche programming targeting teens. The WB increased its ratings by using teen TV to promote Warner Bros. artists and those who might be signed to that label in the future, while Warner Bros. benefited form having its artists and hopefuls promoted on the network (Aslinger). Since its foray into original narrative programming for teens in 1996, Disney has made a consistent effort to integrate its television, radio, and record label fare by promoting its actors as entertainers and blending acting with music performances in television programs and promotional segments on an array of channels, web-based content, films, and soundtracks, most of which attract tween and/or teen audiences. It is widely held, then, that the Disney brand, and Disney Channel in particular, both perpetuates and precipitates from such synergistic marketing efforts.

While I do not wish to construct the Disney conglomerate unproblematically as a unified or monolithic transmedia auteur or industrial identity, nor to reduce the collaborative efforts of the many skilled, creative, and executive individuals and groups who labor within its franchises, I find it necessary to clarify here why this dissertation *does* rely on the notion of this conglomerate as an entity that operates in particular ways to make meanings through girl-driven franchises, among its many other revenue streams. Indeed, it is by virtue of the collaborations of those individuals and groups and the rights granted to the company's shareholders that the corporation can be afforded certain legal rights and protections, similar to individual citizens. The U.S. Supreme Court defines corporations as independent legal entities (Courtney). Several individuals, in a variety of capacities within the Disney conglomerate, are quoted throughout this project, but their work and their statements must be understood within the context of the corporation. They represent one or more particular cultures of production and the values—however contradictory they may be—imposed by the Walt Disney Company. Inasmuch as corporations have been recognized as rights-holding citizens, and inasmuch as they actively circulate and reproduce unified branded industrial identities, they may be construed as "imagining," "envisioning," or "constructing" themselves, their subsidiaries and cultural laborers, and their target markets in particular ways. For example, the Project on Disney reveals that at Disney theme parks,

> Disney's conceit of theater marshals the creative and emotional energies of its workers and creates a situation in which they are always performing for the company . . .. It is also, however, the vehicle for whatever departures they make from it—the determinate structure that brings forth in spite of itself the indeterminate practices for which it nevertheless finds uses. (Klugman et al. 113)

This deliberate effort to create and constrain a particular production culture is also evident at Disney studios. As John Thornton Caldwell argues regarding Disney's and other studios' uses of architecture to generate particular production cultures, "As corporate replicas, the resulting production spaces also publicly express and articulate to workers and visitors the central themes, individual strengths, and identity of each production enterprise" (Caldwell 77). And Alan Bryman, Sean Griffin, and the members of the Project on Disney each describe ways in which the Disney Company structures and operationalizes language, in particular, to make workers' labors invisible in the service of theatricality and discourses of "magic" (Bryman *The Disneyization*; Griffin; Klugman et al.). While the experience of a highly paid and publically recognized Disney executive, such as Sweeney, differs greatly from that of a theme park employee or a young star on a popular television series, the executive may be doubly suited to represent the culture of the company since she reproduces Disney values as well as being in a position to determine or regulate how others do so. Although a complex network of individuals and groups generates the visual and rhetorical manifestations of the "corporate imagination," then, conglomerates such as the Walt Disney Company clearly foster particular working cultures and discourses that can constrain how and what meanings are made within and beyond the organization. As such, Disney Channel can be said to construct girlhood in particular ways through its narrative representations of girls, its appeals to girl consumers and audiences, its girl-driven corporate citizenship campaigns, and its promotion of girl celebrities.

Nickelodeon, The WB, and Disney Channel: Programming for Girls

Teenagers have been seen as a lucrative niche audience for U.S. television since the 1950s, when one of the smaller broadcast networks, ABC, risked alienating wider audiences in order to focus on youth and create a niche for programs like *A Date with Judy* (1952-1953), *American Bandstand* (1952-1989), *Junior Press Conference* (1953-1954), *Disneyland* (1954-2008), and, later, *The Jetsons* (1962-1963), *The Patty Duke Show* (1963-1966), *Shindig* (1964-1965) and *Gidget* (1965-1966), while the other networks focused on attracting as wide an audience as possible. Although, as Mary Celeste Kearney asserts, family shows on each of the major networks during TV's first decade often included teen characters that became central to storylines over the course of the 1950s ("Teenagers and Television"). Elsewhere, Kearney explores the multiple re/iterations of two girl-focused texts across media platforms via "transmedia exploitation" from the 1940s through the mid-1950s as part of "the original teen-girl production trend," which included the production of television series, *A Date with Judy* and *Meet Corliss Archer* (CBS 1954) ("Recycling Judy" 265). Bill Osgerby cites a "torrent of 'teen girl' shows produced during the 1950s and 1960s," arguing that the development of media texts for teen girls during those years was "part of a wider business machine geared to reaping profit from a new, lucrative consumer market" (Osgerby 75). Exploring ABC's approach to teen girls in the 1960s, Moya Luckett argues that media producers challenged themselves to represent "the 'unrepresentable'—a teenager and teenage life" via *The Patty Duke Show* and *Gidget* ("Girl Watchers" 99). "[T]hese girls were a source of media fascination due to their unprecedented spending

power and their new role as trendsetters" (Luckett "Girl Watchers" 100). For Luckett, ABC's attempt to attract teen girls with *The Patty Duke Show* resulted in the creation of "a 'teenage block' between 8-9p.m. on Wednesday nights, pairing *The Patty Duke Show* with *Shindig* (1964-65) and then with *Gidget* (1965-66) to consolidate its girl appeal" ("Girl Watchers" 99). Osgerby links this early teen girl TV trend to the 1990s' resurgence of TV and other media geared toward teen girls, citing correlating increases in the adolescent population during each era. Yet, it is important also to acknowledge the role of the growing number of networks and expanding media conglomerates in the industry's focus on girls as a niche audience at the end of the twentieth century.

The 1990s' resurgence of interest in teen girl audiences came at a time when the assumed logic bolstering television production for children (pre-adolescents) was that the largest, most lucrative child audience could only come from shows made for or about boys. Since toy manufacturers wanted most to advertise to boys and since ostensibly "boys won't watch girls' programs" (Seiter and Mayer 123), boys had been the primary target market for children's programming. While girl audiences command a significant amount of attention from children's television producers today, two decades ago strategies for successful children's programs focused on boys. So, a program featuring a tween or teen girl character would need to appeal to both boys and girls, but to many that seemed like an unnecessary risk to take. Challenging the accepted wisdom and disproving the rule that boys would not watch girl-focused programs, producers at Nickelodeon developed *Clarissa Explains It All* (1991-1994), whose girl protagonist did attract a co-ed audience. Motivating a return to the kind of teen girl programming block

ABC created in the early 1960s (Luckett "Girl Watchers"), the show spawned others like it on the network, including *The Secret World of Alex Mack* (1994-1998) and *The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo* (1996-1998).

On the heels of those successes, non-cable broadcast networks began to focus on attracting audiences with teen-oriented content, constructing niche markets at a time when most broadcast networks were scrambling for ratings. And they ended up appealing most to girls and young women. The threat of impending abolishment of the FCC's "fin-syn" (financing and syndication) rules in 1992 prompted two major studios, Paramount and Warner Brothers, to start their own networks so that they would have distribution outlets for their content even after the other networks stopped relying on the studios for programming (Wee "Teen Television" 45). In 1995, Time-Warner launched the WB network, and two years later its content almost exclusively employed ensemble casts of attractive, primarily white, middle-class teen characters in hour-long dramas accompanied by popular music and flanked by network and recording artist promotions. The WB's approach, according to Valerie Wee, was to combine features of earlier "quality" teen dramas, such as the watershed programs *My So-Called Life* (ABC 1994-1995) and *Beverly Hills, 90210* (FOX, 1990-2000), to create a bevy of cinematic teen serials ("Teen Television" 49). Consequently, in 1998, the WB was the only broadcast network whose ratings actually increased among teen girls and young women, while other networks' ratings declined (Wee "Teen Television" 56).

During this time, Disney had been slow to produce original programming, relying on its library of films and previously aired series for its channel's content until the late

1990s (Wasko 68). While Disney's isolation on premium cable kept some audiences at bay and may have made the production of original programming seem like an unnecessary expense, the channel's non-ad-supported format might have allowed for a broader market since the network would not be at the mercy of toy companies reliant on the consumer habits of boys. Disney Channel began to air its first original series (discussed above) in 1996, which were primarily aimed at teen audiences, though the network had begun production on series to appeal to tweens. By then, Disney Channel had already developed a pattern of appropriating Nickelodeon's concepts, at least as far as Nickelodeon executives were concerned (Simensky). For instance, when Nickelodeon found success airing animated programs, Disney immediately followed suit by producing similar shows.

> Creatively, the early Nicktoons had a great deal of stylistic influence on the animations of the early 1990s. *Ren & Stimpy* copycat programs like Disney's *Schnookums & Meat* proliferated . . . followed by shows more influenced by *Doug* and *Hey Arnold*, such as Disney's *Recess* and *Pepper Ann*. (Simensky 104)

Thus, in 2001, with almost all providers now offering Disney Channel via basic cable—through which top competitor Nickelodeon had always been available—Disney introduced *Lizzie McGuire*, capitalizing on Nickelodeon's success at foregrounding girls without alienating its audience. Disney's original programming also fell in step with Nickelodeon's attempts to appeal to younger audiences—namely the elusive tween demographic.

Disney Channel became a major competitor in the realm of television produced for the tween-aged segment for the cable market. Not surprisingly, the success of *Lizzie*

McGuire led to a feature film, and Disney appears to have been working to replicate the successes of those texts ever since (Giroux and Pollock 83). Little scholarly work has been published regarding the functions of the tween girl franchises in Disney's empire. In 2001, Wasko found that few studies of Disney prior to her own were grounded in economic considerations, creating a glut of Disney studies that overlooked Disney's functions as a business. But, in her 2010 book, *Teen Media: Hollywood and the Youth Market in the Digital Age*, Valerie Wee does identify the economic importance of a few of Disney's most successful multi-platform media franchises targeting tweens since 2000, each beginning as an original program or movie broadcast on Disney Channel. Though not particularly interested in discourses of girlhood, girl audiences, or girl stars, Wee examines the ways in which tween-targeted franchises, *High School Musical*, The Jonas Brothers,[1] and *Hannah Montana*, rising out of Disney Channel programming allow the larger Disney conglomerate a multiplicity of outlets for synergistic cross-promotion. The texts she discusses are promoted across media formats to extend the life of Disney's branded programs and stars, to benefit the company's coffers. Wee emphasizes that "[every] aspect of Disney's franchises was carefully organized to exploit the company's multi-media holdings while effectively targeting its preferred demographic" (*Teen Media* 173). These franchises extend well beyond Disney's multiple television, music industry, and film production holdings to live performance licensing, video game development, online commerce and activities, and myriad consumer products.

[1] The Jonas Brothers are a rock band launched prior to appearing on Disney Channel, but whose appearances on *Hannah Montana* and *Camp Rock* in 2008 vaulted them into the spotlight and resulted in an array of additional series, Disney original movies, tours, and albums for Hollywood Records.

Wee considers the particular significance of tween girls to Disney's strategies only in the final lines of her chapter on Disney and tweens, when she refers to Disney's decision in 2009 to shift focus to tween boys, since "its success so far was primarily relegated to the tween girl market" (*Teen Media* 191). Her research, then, offers much in the way of addressing the lack of scholarship on Disney Channel's development of multi-platform media franchises for tween audiences, but does not respond to questions about how Disney envisions its audiences, or the significance of Disney's construction of girlhood within the broader discourses of postfeminist culture. Juxtaposing issues of performativity and celebrity, as well as discourses of postfeminism and tween and adolescent girlhoods, this dissertation aims to explore also the industrial, economic functions of girlhood and girl stars in the business of producing and growing Disney Channel and the Disney empire.

DISCOURSES OF GIRLHOOD

While this dissertation considers the complicated relationship between the particularities of postfeminist "tween," or pre-adolescent, girlhood and the teen characters and stars imagined by popular media as aspirational role models for tween girls, scholarship on girlhood and girls' cultures has focused significant attention on female adolescence. Discourses of female adolescence have circulated in parts of the global West since the sixteenth century, dictated by the shifting social and economic functions of female youth in different cultural contexts.

> In the sixteenth century, a new word emerged [in the Netherlands], describing youngsters of the female sex. This word, 'meisje', ('girl') differed from the

> former description daughter', 'maiden', or 'virgin' in that, for the first time, it reflected an identity in itself, an autonomous category. (De Ras 152)

Girlhood was understood as the phase of life between menarche and marriage (loss of virginity) in Western Europe during the 1500s. The category of "girl," then, extended beyond the conventional femininity that defines female subjects only in relation to men. Young females were no longer solely daughters or wives—they now occupied a liminal space between childhood and adulthood, as also autonomous subjects. Similarly, the concept of "adolescence" in late modernity is constructed as a liminal state, one stage of girlhood leading to adult womanhood and "central to the development of the modern subject" (Driscoll *Girls* 7).

When it comes to defining female adolescence, Barbara Hudson illuminates the contradictory discourses of age and gender at work in notions of normative adolescent girlhood. She argues that, "femininity and adolescence are *subversive* of one another" (Hudson 31). If popular discourse constructs adolescence as masculine, as Hudson argues, then representing and living a socially acceptable female adolescence becomes a challenge.

> If adolescence is characterized by masculine constructs, then any attempts by girls to satisfy society's demands of them *qua* adolescence, are bound to involve them in displaying not only a lack of maturity (since adolescence is dichotomized with maturity), but also a lack of femininity. (Hudson 35)

Such contradictions define adolescent girlhood even as the discursive frameworks of age and gender continue to shift. For Hudson, writing in the early 1980s, femininity is the defining discourse for female adolescence. Yet, in more recent decades, girls—particularly middle-class girls—have gained access to forms of masculinity, making it

necessary to rethink Hudson's argument. For instance, Kearney argues that several independent girl-focused films produced in the mid- to late-1990s present masculinized portrayals of adolescent girlhood as a result of increased attention to the "confidence gap" between girls and boys (Orenstein qtd. in "Girlfriends" 132). Thus, Kearney finds that these films convey the message that "female youth need to develop and exhibit attributes traditionally associated with femininity *and* masculinity" (italics in original, "Girlfriends" 140).

Feminist theorists have paid close attention to the role of the body in discursive constructions of femininity, womanhood, and female adolescence. Expanding upon the notion of adolescence as a gendered construct, Anita Harris illustrates how female adolescence has been constructed in terms of responsibility and containment discourses, particularly in relation to the body and emotions. She explains how such discourses work to make management of the body and emotional relationships the primary tasks of female adolescence (Harris "Everything"). As their bodies change, girls are expected to maintain physical attractiveness, to contain their sexual desires while presenting the "'correct' sexual identity," and to suppress unfeminine emotions such as anger and selfishness (Harris "Everything" 114). In this sense, contemporary adolescent girlhood is very much a matter of embodied performance, and visibility becomes necessary for determining girls' "successful" identities.

Competing contemporary discourses construct teen girls as either "can-do" or "at-risk," hinging on issues of "empowerment," privilege, and individual choice (Harris *Future*). "[I]t is the features of current times that render young womanhood a site of

either new possibilities or problems, that fill young women with confidence and optimism or, conversely, leave them alienated and self-destructive" (Harris *Future* 14). Harris finds that successful, "can-do" girlhood is enacted via the display of appropriate consumption and correct choices regarding those consumer patterns, as well as regarding academic performance and reproduction. Girls are made responsible for their lives, which appear to consist of a series of choices, regardless of systemic inequities that regulate class privilege and access to resources, including the education and disposable income necessary to support those performances of successful girlhood. This discourse of individual responsibility represents one impact of a shift toward neoliberalism over the past few decades. Mythologizing about individuals' control over their material circumstances allows for neoliberal policy to relieve the government and major corporations of responsibility to citizens through deregulation and cuts in public funding for social services, such as education and health care. The result has been an increased focus on visibility, consumerism, and personal choice as the primary factors in successful citizenship. These factors are relevant throughout this dissertation and are of particular focus in Chapter four's discussions of celebrity-brand development and forms of consumer-based activism and citizenship.

Following Harris' work, Sarah Projansky positions images of girlhood at the end of the twentieth century within the context of the emerging discourse of postfeminism (defined in the following section) ("Mass Magazine"). Popular media continue to address girls as future girlfriends, wives, and mothers, but they also simultaneously position girls as powerful consumer citizens and as potential leaders (either upholding that potential as

"can-do" girls or being barred from achieving it as "at-risk" girls). In addition, media employ images of girls to stand in for a variety of social concerns and issues that may or may not directly affect or be influenced by actual girls' lives. For Projansky, it is not enough to argue that media position girls as symbols. She argues that girls' studies scholars must also explore what such symbolic use of girls' images means for definitions of girlhood (Projansky "Mass Magazine"). In particular, Projansky calls for more research that complicates the relationships between shifting discourses of girlhood and the functions of girls' representations in contemporary popular culture ("Mass Magazine"). Yet, discourses of female adolescence are different from discourses of pre-adolescent girlhood, and greater attention to the consumer power of pre-adolescent girls, in particular, over the past two decades has required a shift in focus of scholarship on girls to incorporate "tween" girlhood.

In the first chapter of Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh's indispensible collection of essays on tween culture, *Seven Going on Seventeen: tween studies in the culture of girlhood*, the editors point out a void in girls' studies scholarship regarding pre-adolescent girlhood, and they work to address the gap. They argue that the "downward shift in age of much of girls' consumer culture" has led to a desire to theorize what marketers in the mid-1990s began to refer to as "tween" girlhood, as a form of girlhood distinct from adolescence (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 5). Similar to the development of teen consumer culture in the 1950s, an increasing "tween" population throughout the 1980s was eventually construed by marketing firms as the solidification of a new youth demographic worthy of recognition and in need of its own brand strategies (Kantrowitz

and Wingert). Although my project does not trace the origins of the "tween" label, I would problematize the common assumption that "previous to the 1990s the tween girl did not exist" (Coulter 158). Many scholars define the term "tween" by its proliferation in the 1990s, but it was in use by marketers and media professionals before then, if not necessarily "recognized by the public conscious as being a unique stage of development" (Coulter 158). While early uses of the term appear to have been gender neutral (see Hall "Tween power," for example), cultural shifts since the late 1980s, including the increasing association of tween culture with fashion and beauty industries and girl-focused mass media—especially, I would argue, on Disney Channel since 2000—have together led to the feminization of the term (Cook and Kaiser).

For Mitchell and Reid-Walsh, tweendom represents the conceptualization of a stage between early childhood and adolescence. "The idea of tweens could be seen to link to current discussions of early puberty and or sexuality in girls and to ideas stemming from the medieval period" (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 12). Rather than being simply a new consumer demographic, constructed by contemporary marketing interests, as many refer to it, then, Mitchell and Reid-Walsh delineate connections between the tween and historical conceptualizations of stages of childhood and youth.

> It appears that a market construction has somehow anticipated or is at least paralleling a physiological one. In some cases, western concerns about 'death of childhood' and 'hurried childhood' seem to be coming true for some western and westernized girls, as they have always been for the majority of girls in developing countries throughout the world. (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 13)

Yet, just as other categories of age and maturity are not fixed, the tween is not a stable category. The tween shifts downward, though it is important to acknowledge the

physiological dimension of this conceptualization of the tween and to recognize that it has a downward limit (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 13). For instance, similar to the ways in which the category of the teen has been aligned with physiological puberty, the tween is often linked with the earlier onset of puberty becoming more common for some girls. And just as teen identities have been aspirational ones for tween girls, tween identities appeal to younger and younger girls. While the term "tween" has been popularized primarily as an age demarcation, due to its significance as a market demographic, Mitchell and Reid-Walsh argue that contradictory discourses have begun to emerge within the construction of the tween. For example, as tween culture reaches downward in target age, the category simultaneously alternates between including or excluding boys, becoming both a feminine categorization and sometimes a gender neutral one, like "teen." In addition, the authors suggest that tween culture "may come to mean simply a variation or miniaturization of teen culture," ultimately elongating female youth and allowing females from age eight to age thirty access to the category of "girl" via participation in tween and teen girl culture (Mitchell and Reid-Walsh 15).

Throughout this dissertation, girlhood signifies both a relation to commerce and a discursive subjectivity. This analysis follows Driscoll's understanding of the discursively constructed girl as "encompassing no specific age group but rather an idea of mobility preceding the fixity of womanhood and implying an unfinished process of personal development" (*Girls* 47). The characters in Disney Channel programs and promotions and their primary audiences are constructed as girls within the context of popular and commercial discourses, which position them as young-women-in-training. The term

tween is employed here to reign in the broad category of the girl, to foreground tensions between gender and generation, and to focus on the ways in which girls are addressed who belong to that emergent market demographic of female-identified youths between the ages of about 9 and 14 (sometimes also including girls as young as six). For the project at hand, these tensions, so prevalent within girls' consumer culture, are best explored via scholarship on postfeminist media culture, such as that discussed in the following section.

FROM POSTFEMINISM TO POSTFEMINIST DISCOURSE

Any feminist media analysis focusing on late-twentieth-century or early twenty-first-century texts must grapple with a variety of understandings of feminist thought and postfeminist discourse. This section begins by exploring Rosalind Gill's significant intervention into the seeming chaos of postfeminisms by delineating three key perspectives on this concept and coming to terms with her own definition, with which my analysis is aligned. Throughout the discussion, I incorporate the work of other feminist scholars who address one or more of those perspectives and whose work emphasizes the importance of cultural and critical media studies. Angela McRobbie's exploration of how postfeminism impacts and may be reproduced by young women in the workforce in the U.K. and the U.S. and Diane Negra and Yvonne Tasker's focus on postfeminist media culture also guide this discussion. Finally, Harris's theorization of late-twentieth-century girlhoods and Projansky's work on contemporary media representations of girlhood work as jumping off points for locating girlhood within postfeminist discourse and analyzing

girlhood in postfeminist media culture, both of which are imperative to the project at hand.

Defining Postfeminism

In *Gender and the Media*, Gill discusses how postfeminism has been understood in three overlapping configurations, the first of which is as an epistemological shift resulting from feminism(s)' intersections with postmodern, poststructural, and postcolonial movements. A second understanding of postfeminism defines it as a historical transformation tied to a particular late-twentieth century moment. Gill argues that this approach "attempts to periodize feminism and regards postfeminism as a period after (the height of) second-wave feminism" (*Gender* 251). In this view, postfeminism is bound up in critiquing second-wave feminism, but the characteristics of postfeminism itself remain elusive in this configuration. Gill explains the third definition of postfeminism as a somewhat oversimplified reaction against feminist movements, more accurately referred to as antifeminist backlash. When understood this way, postfeminism is at its most prevalent, potent, and insidious a reaction to the Women's Liberation Movement of feminism's so-called "Second Wave." Finally, Gill offers her own synthesis of these definitions when she elaborates on the concept of a "postfeminist sensibility." Gill argues that:

> [P]ostfeminism is best understood not as an epistemological perspective, nor as a historical shift, and not (simply) as a backlash, in which its meanings are pre-specified. Rather, postfeminism should be conceived of as a *sensibility*, and postfeminist media culture should be our *critical object*; the phenomenon which analysts must inquire into and interrogate. (*Gender* 254)

Rather than being defined against a problematic notion of static feminism, Gill's postfeminism seeks to understand contemporary representations of gender through the exploration of recurring tropes, themes, and constructions in media. Gill describes postfeminism not as a form of feminism, nor in line with the intersectional cultural politics of "Third Wave" feminism,[2] but as "a sensibility" to be explored within media culture. Gill finds that:

> there are a number of recurring and relatively stable themes, tropes, and constructions that characterize gender representations in the media in the early twenty-first century. These include the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; the emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus upon individualism; the dominance of the makeover paradigm; the articulation or entanglement of feminist and anti-feminist ideas; the resurgence in ideas of natural sexual difference; a marked sexualization of culture; and en emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference.... (*Gender* 255)

And these themes all "coexist with stark and continuing inequalities and exclusions that relate to 'race' and ethnicity, class, age, sexuality, and disability—as well as gender" (Gill *Gender* 255). Influenced by postmodernist and constructionist perspectives, scholars studying postfeminism thus define it as a disperse and fluid phenomenon stabilized in the contemporary early-twenty-first century moment by multiple recurring discourses. With this dissertation, I further disentangle "postfeminism" from its potential

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[2] "Third Wave" feminism works to account for the intersections of race, gender, class, and other identities, focusing on shifting power relations, and paying critical attention to popular culture, especially media. In their impactful "Third Wave" feminist text, *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future*, Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards state that "[f]eminism means that women have the right to enough information to make informed choices about their lives" (55). For these authors, contemporary feminism is a disperse social and political movement that emphasizes the importance of access to information, as well as individual choice. Leslie Heywood and Jennifer Drake distinguish "Third Wave" feminism from "Second Wave" feminism (i.e. the Women's Liberation Movement) by its recognition and acceptance of embodied differences and the material conditions of lived experience, critiquing the previous wave as individualizing and exclusionary, although, notably, other scholars and activists also have launched similar critiques of the "Third Wave."

construal as a practice or a movement and position it firmly within the realm of rhetorical social construction (though not without regard to its practical, affective, and material consequences) as a discursive framework. As I will show below, McRobbie and Tasker and Negra have offered similar understandings of postfeminism within which media analyses are integral.

Studying Postfeminist Culture

McRobbie theorizes postfeminism such that it "invokes feminism as that which can be taken into account . . . to install a whole repertoire of new meanings which emphasize that it is no longer needed" (*The Aftermath* 12). In *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change*, she explores shifting gender codes, the consumerism at the root of the "post-feminist masquerade" and a "new sexual contract" between men and women. She finds that femininity is enacted and embodied in certain ways as young women enter the labor market and become visible, autonomous, and financially self-sufficient in ways women often could not prior to the gains made by late-twentieth-century feminist and civil rights movements, as well as in ways that many women still do not have access to today. Postfeminist culture takes feminist gains into account in order to swiftly relegate them to history in the face of assumed, rather than actual, equal opportunities for men and women. Hinting at the position of girlhood within that understanding of postfeminist culture, McRobbie argues that "[t]he production of girlhood now comprises a constant stream of incitements and enticements to engage a range of specified practices which are understood to be both progressive but also consummately and reassuringly feminine" (*The Aftermath* 57). This understanding of the

requirement of heteronormative feminine presentation for performing successful girlhood is a common thread of analysis throughout the chapters of this dissertation, with the theory of the postfeminist masquerade being particularly useful to the analysis in Chapters one, two, and three.

Integral to upholding "the new sexual contract" required by postfeminist culture, McRobbie cites (following Chandra Mohanty) a certain abandonment of the critique of "hegemonic masculinities" and patriarchy (*The Aftermath* 57-58). Under this new sexual contract, "the young woman's success seems to promise economic prosperity on the basis of her enthusiasm for work and having a career" (*The Aftermath* 57-58). The image of the modern girl or young woman has entered a vast array of global discourses, as "the friendly (hence unthreatening), beautiful and somehow pliable, global girl who exudes good will, thus [marking] out the spaces of undoing of post-colonial critical pedagogy as well as of post-colonial feminist critique" (*The Aftermath* 59). Most significantly, the "girling" of adult womanhood—and women's efforts to disguise themselves as "spectacularly feminine"—work to mask those ambitions and successes that threaten male dominance. For McRobbie, "[t]he commercial domain requires that young women prioritise consumption for the sake of sexual intelligibility and in the name of heterosexual desire, and this in turn intersects with and confirms the neoliberal turn...[toward] consumer-citizenship" (*The Aftermath* 90). In Chapter one, I discuss McRobbie's conceptualization of the "luminosity" granted women by the fashion-beauty complex in relation to celebrity girlhood, media industries, and the sparkling aesthetics of the "spectacularly feminine." And this discussion continues throughout my theorization

of how some girls are "spectacularized" differently, to use Projansky's terminology, in Chapter two.

It would seem that, for the new sexual contract to hold true, young girls, who are not of age to work or embark on higher education and are still dependent on parents or guardians, must aspire to the postfeminist masquerade that will enable their successes. And they must access femininity via consumption as so-called consumer-citizens who are not afforded the same rights and protections of adult citizens. While Tasker and Negra, along with others such as Meenakshi Gigi Durham, have written about "girling" as a feminization of U.S. culture and the infantilization of adult women, few scholars have theorized the particular role of girlhood within postfeminist discourses, which focus attention on those women who participate in paid and taxed labor—even moreso, those women who are successful in reaching high levels of rank and pay.

In their introduction to *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (2007), Tasker and Negra claim that "[f]eminism challenges us to critique relations of power, to imagine the world as other than it is, to conceive of different patterns of work, life, and leisure. Postfeminist culture enacts fantasies of regeneration and transformation that also speak to a desire for change. Clearly, however, it is unhelpful to mistake one for the other" (Tasker and Negra "Introduction" 22). For Tasker and Negra, postfeminist culture works to "incorporate, assume, or naturalize aspects of feminism . . . [by emphasizing] educational and professional opportunities for women and girls," while assuming women's total economic freedom and the choice to work or not work, as if most women have the option ("Introduction" 2). In this way,

postfeminism constructs women as socioeconomically privileged and, consequently, as cisgendered, heterosexual, and white, offering consumption as a "strategy for the production of the self" (Tasker and Negra "Introduction" 2).

In order to sustain such a discourse of female identity and agency that denies class-based, sexual, racial, and ethnic differences as well as the institutional barriers and constraints that continue to oppress women, "feminism is constituted as an unwelcome, implicitly censorious presence," and feminist concerns are silenced and relegated to history (Tasker and Negra "Introduction" 3, 8). Yet feminists have also denied such differences and institutional barriers. If feminism is not always critical of power and difference, then, distinctions between postfeminist discourse and feminist discourses may be difficult to discern. While this certainly complicates the connection made above between postfeminist discourse and women's continued oppression, it also points to the intimate relationship of postfeminist discourse to feminisms.

Tasker and Negra argue that critiquing postfeminist media culture is integral to the work of contemporary feminism. For Tasker and Negra, postfeminist media products magnify the ageist fetishization of youth already prevalent in U.S. culture ("Introduction" 10). Such texts focus increasingly on makeover scenarios, privileging hegemonic standards of beauty and the refiguring of female bodies toward a youthful appearance, and they align women's citizenship, freedom, power, and autonomy with sexuality, consumption, and consumer choice. Gill claims that young women are then constituted as the "ideal neoliberal subjects" (*Gender* 249), just as for Tasker and Negra, "the 'girling' of femininity itself is evident in both the celebration of the young woman as a marker of

postfeminist liberation and the continuing tendency to either explicitly term or simply treat women of a variety of ages as girls" ("Introduction" 18). In addition to the "girling" influence of media, other products take on the functions of such media. As I argue in Chapter three, girls' fashion lines produced by Disney and based on Disney Channel characters also communicate a particularly luminous, postfeminist masquerade of "girly-ness" for tween girl consumers.

"Girling" versus Girlhoods

As Tasker and Negra have argued, "girlhood is imagined in postfeminist culture as being for everyone; that is, girlhood offers a fantasy of transcendence and evasion, a respite from other areas of experience" ("Introduction" 18). And such postfeminist "girlhood" is approached via consumption—available only to those who can afford to maintain it. The "girling" of adult women is understood as a celebration of youthfulness that is used to infantilize and degrade women of all ages, but what is the role of girlhood here? Are girls also being "girled"? Or is the "girling" of adult women having the opposite effect of compelling the blurring of boundaries from the other side? Not only must women aspire to youthfulness, but young girls must aspire to certain types of womanhood in postfeminist culture. The overt and widely visible sexualization of younger and younger girls allows for them to appear as "matured" into womanhood before they can be expected to make sense of the so-called "choices" that women are accused of making in the maintenance if this new sexual contract that binds them. And material consumption is the primary mechanism for operating successfully within the postfeminist sexual contract.

While theorizations of the postfeminist "girling" of women and womanhood are several, this project delineates connections between postfeminism and both the "girling" of girlhoods and the sort of "woman-ing" afforded not only by the "girling" of adults, but also by the sexualization of young girls in popular culture. Just as adult women might aspire to look younger, contemporary girls are encouraged to mimic women's interpretations of youthful femininity to enhance their own "girl-ness." In the context of postfeminist cultural discourse, then, girls may appear to be especially successful at performing girlhood when they participate in the fetishization and sexualization of the young, feminine body via consumerism. Such fetishization is structured according to Western cultural ideals, so that postfeminist discourse easily overlooks racial and class differences and systemic oppressions, as well as the continued inequalities suffered by women and girls, in order to individualize failures and install successes as proof that feminism is no longer needed. If girls are relegated to the role of aspiring to "girly" adult womanhood in such a context, they can be seen as also aspiring to ideals of wealthy whiteness. Yet, it is necessary to complicate such a construction of girlhood that negates differences, in order to explore how postfeminist culture may be changing the ways in which we understand contemporary U.S. girlhoods.

As discussed above, Anita Harris theorizes the "can-do" girl—a teen girl—as critical in the "remaking of subjectivity" (*Future* 16). For Harris, the "can-do" girl is "the ideal late modern subject . . . who is flexible, individualized, resilient, self-driven, and self-made and who easily follows nonlinear trajectories to fulfillment and success" (*Future* 16). For both McRobbie and Harris, "girl" fluidly refers to teenage girlhood as

well as to young womanhood. Yet, by discussing the experiences of teen girls focused on academic success, rather than paid employment, Harris also attempts to explore the ways in which discourses of career success have become significant for girls who are not (yet) part of the workforce. Harris argues that the "can-do" girl becomes a vessel for society's fears, anxieties, and hope for the future in contemporary, neoliberal culture, while her opposite, the "at-risk girl," functions as a scapegoat for misaligned and oppressive social and economic systems. Her view of twenty-first-century girlhoods clearly aligns with the theories of postfeminist discourse discussed above, since, for her, "girling" is not just a matter of infantilized womanhood or the youthful feminization of culture, but also relies on the recognition that girls do have access to power in a culture that imbues them with so much potential and fortitude while it strives to exploit their visibility and consumption patterns. Following Harris, Projansky has intervened to emphasize the need for feminist scholars to parse out the positions of actual girls and girl cultures from the postfeminist girling or girlishness of women.

Like Harris, Projansky understands "girl-ness," rather than girlish womanhood, as the epitome of postfeminism and calls for girls' media scholars to emphasize "the way girl discourse mobilizes age, race, and agency—alongside postfeminist discourse—to delimit the kinds of sides available for us (hypothetically) to take" in the supposed feminist/postfeminist binary constructed by popular media ("Mass Magazine" 69). In her study of mass magazine cover girls, she finds that the tensions between "can-do" and "at-risk" discourses of girlhood are frequently understood by scholars via a "disruption-containment" model of criticism, in which media representations of girlhoods

simultaneously hold feminist potential to disrupt hegemonic gender expectations while also functioning to contain girls within hegemonic, heteronormative, white-privileging ideals of girlhood ("Mass Magazine" 66-69). She sees in Rachel Moseley's study of magic and glamour in girls' television programs and in Michele Byers's discussion of pathologized identities in *My So-Called Life* the representation of contradictory discourses apparent in all postfeminist media—as both "feminist and antifeminist, liberating and repressive, productive and obstructive of progressive social change" ("Mass Magazine" 68). Yet, according to Projansky, feminist media scholars focused on girls' cultural studies must move past this binary focus (as Sarah Banet-Weiser and Angela McRobbie have in their work), beyond determining whether texts are more or less feminist or antifeminist (Banet-Weiser "Girls Rule"; McRobbie "*More*").

If media culture is the dominant site of the mutual constitution of girlhood and postfeminism in this context, as Projansky and Tasker and Negra have argued, then it is increasingly important to explore how girls and girlhood are discursively constructed in the media they consume. The project at hand aims to further explore the discursive construction of girlhood(s) within postfeminist U.S. culture, with particular attention to the economic functions of those constructions for the major media conglomerate that reproduces them, the Walt Disney Company. The following section focuses on literature regarding girlhood in contemporary U.S. media culture.

GIRLHOOD IN U.S. POPULAR MEDIA CULTURE

This dissertation foregrounds girlhoods performed in contemporary popular U.S. media, focusing on the functions of ethnic and racial difference, femininity, adolescence,

"tween" identity, sexuality, and celebrity therein. In addition, the project examines the imperatives that continue to lead one of the world's largest, most powerful media conglomerates to envision girlhoods in the ways it does, positioning girl audiences as a lucrative target market and girl performers as multi-platform franchise properties. The dearth of scholarly literature exploring girl entertainers' performances of girlhood for public consumption makes it necessary to pull together scholarship on stardom and celebrity, girlhood studies, and performance in order to craft a foundation for this research. In addition, below, I review literature regarding girls as media consumers and representations of girlhood in popular U.S. media.

Contemporary TV Representations of Girls

Scholarship regarding girl-focused U.S. television since the 1990s includes analyses of the feminist potential of teen girl protagonists, as well as analyses of representations of gender, sexuality, multiculturalism, and adolescence. Much of this scholarship also attributes the mid-1990s' increase in the media industries' attention to teen girl audiences as part of niche marketing strategies to appeal to teens, as constructed, for example, with the launch of the Warner Brothers (WB) Television Network in 1995 (replaced in 2006 by the CW Television Network) and extended with the 2002 launch of Nickelodeon's The N (now called TeenNick).

Programs such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (UPN, WB 1997-2003), *Gilmore Girls* (WB, CW 2000-2007), *Veronica Mars* (UPN, CW 2004-2007), and *Degrassi: The Next Generation* (CTV [Canada], TeenNick, MTV, MuchMusic [Canada] 2001-present) are the focus of two collections on teen television, *Teen TV: Genre, Consumption, and*

Identity and *Teen Television: Essays on Programming and Fandom*. Inserting Miley Stewart and Hannah Montana, and eventually also the characterizations of girlhood in *That's So Raven* and *Wizards of Waverly Place*, into the discussions begun there about shows aimed at older teen audiences may help us understand the different role of discourses of tween girlhood and the imagined tween girl audience in Disney Channel's representation of teen girlhood. Although they focus on teen media culture rather than on tween media culture, these collections remain relevant to my tween-oriented project since the texts I analyze throughout this dissertation also feature teen protagonists and stars growing out of tweendom while portraying those teen characters. Caralyn Bolte explores how both *Veronica Mars* and *Buffy* rely on their ability, as UPN/WB/CW programs addressing a niche market, to offer cultural commentary from the margins via their protagonists' positions as exiles. Veronica (played by Kristen Bell) and Buffy (Sarah Michelle Gellar) are thus represented as outsiders alienated from their immediate communities and society at large. Bolte discusses Buffy as a "young woman" negotiating multiple identities (one, her secret life as a vampire slayer and the other as a girl in high school) and adds that those identities allow for the show to comment on "adolescent life" (103). "The show consistently critiques traditionally held notions of gender" (Bolte 104). But while *Buffy* relies on metaphor to launch its cultural critique, Bolte finds that *Veronica Mars* integrates "the same issues within a realistic context of ethnic and socioeconomic separation" (102). Thus, in their distinct ways, each show uses a teen girl protagonist to critique social structures and identity politics.

Examining *Veronica Mars*' challenges to postfeminism, Andrea Braithwaite claims that the show scrutinizes claims of individual freedom and choice, "making public the multiple ways in which young women are constructed, conditioned, and exploited on the basis of their gender and sexuality" (146). The role of adolescent girlhood as cultural critique in *Veronica Mars* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and their networks' (UPN and the WB, which join to form the CW just before the final season of *Veronica Mars*) reliance on these strategies of representation to harness a lucrative teen girl market, make these programs especially interesting in relation to a show like Disney's *Hannah Montana*, which seems more about reinforcing normative girlhood for younger audiences and about promoting itself and other Disney properties than offering subversive potential.

The programs discussed in this literature were produced during the height of Third Wave feminism's popularity and the rise of postfeminism in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and, as such, they are rich texts for feminist critique. For instance, Francesca Gamber studies *Gilmore Girls'* Rory (played by Alexis Bledel) as she "tries on" various models of feminism offered by the women and girls around her in order to construct her own feminist identity. During the course of the show Rory models, through language and appearance, the feminisms of her grandmother, her mother, her dad's girlfriend, and one of her school friends until, in the final season of the show she can refer to herself as a certain "type of girl," not based on the essentialized notions of girlhood offered up by others, but from a position of authority about her own identity (Gamber 127). She intervenes to correct others' assessments of her, telling her date that she's "a girlfriend girl" (not a girl who just wants a social escort), and asserting her pride in the fact that she

aspires to be a successful journalist and career-woman when they refer to her as an unsatisfactory future wife. For Gamber, Rory's experimentation with multiple feminisms allows for her construction of a "Third Wave" feminism that incorporates tenets of a variety of feminist perspectives and allows her to interpret them to best suit her own goals and desires.

Gamber's analysis of *Gilmore Girls*, along with several studies of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* focus on the feminism(s) espoused in the programs, but Jenny Bavidge explores the ways in which *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* subverts the "familiar generic signifiers of feminine weakness and victimhood perpetuated by horror and melodrama film and TV targeted at teenage audiences" (42). By engaging with femininity as performance and questioning "the traditional narrative trajectories of female heroism," *Buffy* critiques the relationships between beauty standards, consumerism, and the performativity of girlhood (Bavidge 49). Just as Rory Gilmore experiments with feminist girlhoods, Buffy negotiates adolescent girlhood by "playing with different performed roles," defining herself against traditional gender conventions, like those echoed more clearly in shows such as *Roswell High* (WB, UPN 1999-2002) and *Smallville* (WB, CW 2001-2011) (Bavidge 42). Like Miley on *Hannah Montana*, Buffy has a secret identity that keeps her yearning to be "just a normal girl," and Veronica has an undercover life into which she can escape the mundane, yet in each case "normality" is recognizably also a fictive category. Like Buffy and Veronica, Miley Stewart is imagined as a wannabe "normal" high school girl, albeit as part of a completely different generic construction, as

a sitcom protagonist versus Buffy's horror genre heroine and Veronica's female sleuth in a crime drama.

While *Buffy*, *Veronica Mars*, and *Gilmore Girls* have been discussed in terms of their ability to offer complex and subversive representations of adolescent girlhood, Sharon Marie Ross emphasizes the homogeneity of teen life in these programs, especially in comparison to CTV's *Degrassi: The Next Generation*, which airs in the U.S. on TeenNick. Nickelodeon's teen-focused cable network uses specific strategies to increase diversity in the network's representations, through its maintenance of original programming and its choices of syndicated programming, such as the Canadian-produced *Degrassi* with its racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse cast of characters. In contrast, the characters that populated the WB/CW in the 1990s and early 2000s were almost exclusively white and middle-class. Banet-Weiser has also commented on the goal of diversity in Nickelodeon's programming for younger girls, such as *Dora the Explorer* (2000-present) (*Kids Rule*). The diversity on Nickelodeon and TeenNick is interesting in comparison to overwhelmingly white and middle-class broadcast network offerings and also in relation to the arguably homogeneous representations on Disney Channel at the time. In "Mixed Race on the Disney Channel: from *Johnny Tsunami* through *Lizzie McGuire* and Ending with *The Cheetah Girls*," Angharad Valdivia suggests that Disney Channel envisions its stars and audience as primarily White. She argues that,

> in Lizzie [McGuire] land the white ones rule . . .. The fact that the heir apparent to Lizzie is Hannah Montana (Miley Cyrus), another blonde/brunette, reaffirms Disney's vision of its stars and audience as it seeks to reproduce the Lizzie tween machine. (285)

Disney Channel now offers more programs with mixed race characters, including *Wizards of Waverly Place*, as well as shows with racially and ethnically diverse casts like *Shake It Up* (Thompson et al. 2010-present), *A.N.T. Farm* (Signer and Engel 2011-present), and *Jessie* (Eells O'Connell and Lapidus 2011-present), although their allegiance to color-blind and post-race discourses ultimately means that they may privilege whiteness alongside programs that foreground white characters. Valdivia's work regarding mixed-race characters on Disney Channel and Mary Beltrán's scholarship on Latina stardom and ethnic ambiguity in popular film and television are integral to may explorations of race and ethnicity in Chapter two.

While much of the literature discussed above refers to representations of teen girls in popular television and geared toward teen audiences,[3] Banet-Weiser explores the ways in which Nickelodeon's *Clarissa Explains It All* (1991-1994) foregrounds adolescent girlhood to attract the tween girl audience. Banet-Weiser finds that Clarissa's reflexive narration and ironic commentary on the dilemmas she faces as an adolescent girl function as a subtle critique of the practices of normative femininity. "[T]he show itself is often organized as a kind of *critique* of the constructed nature of cultural mythologies—of girls, of boys, of romance, of popularity" (Banet-Weiser *Kids Rule* 127). As a response to conventional discourses of youth and gender, incorporating a degree of do-it-yourself (DIY) citizenship, *Clarissa Explains It All* exhibits some of the important tenets of 1990s girl power ideology. Ultimately, though, Banet-Weiser argues that

[3] In their respective studies of *Buffy* and *My So-Called Life*, Mary Kearney and Caryn Murphy each debate the notion that these are solely teen-targeted programs, arguing instead that they also target wider, adult audiences (Kearney "The Changing"; Murphy).

> like postfeminism itself, the agency of Clarissa is reflective of a contradictory version of citizenship; the empowerment that it articulates for young girls does not include a model for how to *access* that citizenship except through representation. (*Kids Rule* 129)

The show espouses some feminist rhetoric but represents a specific kind of contemporary feminism—"one that is fundamentally about tension, contradiction, and ambiguity" (Banet-Weiser *Kids Rule* 140). This early representation of "empowered" adolescent girlhood for a tween audience, then, can be understood both in relation to "Third Wave" feminism, inflected as it is by aspects of "Second Wave" ideology and practice, and also as an iteration of postfeminist discourse.

Focusing primarily on Hollywood cinema's representations of young women, teens, and tweens, Peggy Tally also delineates some of the ways in which tween girls are hailed by U.S. popular media. Tally argues that the tween girl audience is drawn to "empowered" female characters with only passing interest in the romantic plotlines common to commercial movies targeting teen and adult female demographics. Tweens want to identify with young women who exhibit some power and control over their lives and enjoy stories that involve family, friendships, transformations, and rescue fantasies. While they aspire to be teens, they are not necessarily comfortable with teen themes of drugs, alcohol, or sex, and, in fact, may be put off by stories that are focused on romantic relationships. "Tween girls enjoy watching the struggle that the female protagonist goes through, whether it is comedic or dramatic" (Tally 318). Tally attributes this focus on identification with strong female characters to tween girls having "grown up with the concept of 'girl power' in their own lives" (317).

Through girl power culture, "Third Wave" feminism inflects the discursive construction of the tween, while also influencing the way tweens have been constructed since as a consumer demographic. It becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between the tween as discursive construct and the tween as target consumer market here. As such, it is necessary to interrogate representations of powerful girls and women in contemporary commercial media that appear to espouse girl power feminism for the ways in which they function against feminist ideals. The films that Tally discusses promote a white, upper-middle-class world, which privileges consumerism and what I would call a particularly postfeminist femininity. Tally does not use the term postfeminism, but reveals that in a film like *Legally Blond* (2001), which was very popular among teen and tween girl audiences, "much of what passes for empowerment is in reality the freedom for these young women to use their feminine skills and purchasing power to attain their goals" (317). The development of "girl power" media culture, then, can be understood as a significant precursor to the contemporary postfeminist moment in girls' media.

Emilie Zaslow defines girl power as the result of an expansive media culture produced after the late 1990s, which "encourages girls and women to identify both as traditionally feminine objects *and* as powerful feminist agents" (italics in original, 3). Girl power stems from the neoliberal rhetoric of individualism and choice and, although Zaslow does not explore the postfeminist connotations of girl power ideology, her definition of it suggests a relation to the functions of postfeminist discourse theorized by McRobbie, Gill, and others. Yet Zaslow understands girl power as "a watered-down feminist position available as a stylish accessory" and also as "a meaningful and

widespread embodiment of some feminist positions that girls draw upon as they create their gender identities" (9). For my purposes, and following more closely Harris's, McRobbie's, and Gill's scholarship, however, the postfeminist influence in popular girls' media—and particularly that produced by the Walt Disney Company for tween female audiences—seems to undermine (or overwhelm) their feminist potential. While girls undoubtedly find positive, productive, and "empowering" pleasures in contemporary media culture, postfeminist media texts seem less likely than the girl power texts described by Zaslow to offer feminist subject positions upon which girls might draw. As such, this dissertation refers to the postfeminist sensibility in contemporary girls' media culture, rather than analyzing girls' media in relation to the girl power ideology of the previous decade. Particularly integral to the promulgation of a postfeminist sensibility, celebrity culture and girls' increasing cultural visibility in the twenty-first-century also demand further attention. The following section, therefore, provides a review of relevant scholarship regarding contemporary U.S. girl stars.

Girl Stars

In order to understand Raven-Symoné's, Selena Gomez's, and Miley Cyrus's public performances as television and film actors and pop music stars, here I look to the fields of girls' studies, stardom and celebrity studies, and related research. This section incorporates a mix of scholarship on representation and celebrity discourse.

Surveying the landscape of contemporary teen and tween girl-oriented media, Kathleen Sweeney's *Maiden USA: Girl Icons Come of Age* exposes some contradictions between popular representations of ideal girlhoods and those of girlhoods at risk. Though

her study is not theoretically rigorous, it attempts a broad critical discussion of the cultural and political functions of girl icons in contemporary popular media. From the perspective of girls studies, Sweeney takes pop icons to be "dense, focused layers of cultural association which fuse and concentrate into a code representing an ideal, a role model, an identity-by-proxy" (5). She questions how girls' experiences of adolescence may be impacted by the simultaneous idealization and sexualization of their pop icons. Sweeney remarks on Disney's vested interest in a tween girl audience via the "raunchy late 1990s launches" of Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears followed by the "tamer celebrity-building of Disney Channel denizens Raven-Symoné (*That's So Raven*, *The Cheetah Girls*) and Hilary Duff (*Lizzie McGuire*)" (69). Sweeney does not explore in any greater detail the cultural, discursive, ideological, or narrative work of Disney Channel's content or star texts specifically. But there has been some scholarly work regarding the status of stars who distance themselves from Disney Channel.

For instance, Moya Luckett argues that former Mouseketeer Britney Spears, having become an easy target for celebrity gossip, is representative of a shifting relationship between stardom and celebrity. In "Toxic: The Implosion of Britney Spears' Star Image," Luckett analyzes Spears' move to shave her head and publicize the process, seeing in it a career shift that marks a turn toward celebrity and away from stardom. "Unlike stardom, celebrity feeds on exposure without work, highlights the desire for fame without effort, and focuses on private lives lived in public" (Luckett "Toxic" 40). Yet, Spears' career continues while her private life remains fodder for celebrity gossip. Spears' brand of celebrity, based on self-exploitation, becomes a way to both challenge

and take advantage of the sort of "empowerment" granted girls through visibility. Here, Luckett extends connections between girls, girlhood, and celebrity via a particular star image as Spears moves from "discovery" and promotion as another "girl next door" in her role as a Disney Mouseketeer to hypersexualized pop stardom to a sort of fallen or failed celebrity status. Extending Luckett's argument regarding Spears, then, allows us to connect notions of the can-do girl with the popular television trope of obedient girlhood. If the "girl next door" exists in opposition to failures of whiteness and femininity, then she can be understood instead as an iteration of can-do girlhood.

Similar to the way in which Spears' celebrity has been constructed, Lindsay Lohan's publicized struggles with alcohol and drugs paint her as a failed star—one whose material excesses do not appear to be the fruits of labor.

> Lindsay Lohan and other former child actors who appear to indulge in a lifestyle of excess violate the notion that material success is the result of hard work . . .. The younger the celebrity, the less they appear to have paid their dues through work. (Sternheimer 234-235)

This deceptively linear trajectory is often presented as a potentiality for every girl star currently produced in Disney's "star machine." The power that such a girl star may wield for her audience, and her seemingly inevitable fall from grace, drives parental panic over media industries' potential exploitation of girl audiences.

The tensions raised in girl stars' performances—of conflicting discourses of age, gender, and sexuality, about normative girl identities versus celebrity or star personas, and between authenticity and performativity—are all present in the Disney Channel's continued attempts to reproduce normative girlhoods via both the recurring "girl next

door" trope and via representations of spectacular girlhood. These tensions are relevant throughout this dissertation, especially in explorations of girls' navigation of fame and visibility in Chapters one, two, and four. Exploring Hollywood (film-related) stardom, Richard Dyer has argued that "the general image of stardom can be seen as a version of the American Dream, organized around the themes of consumption, success, and ordinariness" (*Stars* 35). Miley Stewart's constant pleas on *Hannah Montana* to be seen as "just a normal girl," in conjunction with Miley Cyrus' pleas in public press to be forgiven for her mistakes, because "nobody's perfect," (such as after Annie Leibovitz's photos of her in the June 2008 issue of *Vanity Fair* raised eyebrows), easily legitimate "notions that human attributes exist independently of material circumstances" (*Stars* 43). As I discuss in Chapter two, this "American Dream" discourse of stardom is also useful when considering the functions of ethnicity in the celebrity branding of Selena Gomez. In efforts to preserve its reputation as an outlet for wholesome, all-American fare, the Walt Disney Company continues to reproduce female stardom as ordinary, without reference to the potential differences between the material conditions of Disney Channel audiences and those of Disney's stars or its characters. Annette Funicello is often cited as Disney's original "girl next door" in her role as a Mouseketeer on the *Mickey Mouse Club* in the 1960s. For instance, Sarah Nilsen writes of Funicello's Italian-American ethnic identity as part of her relatability—as "normal" because of her difference. And Claire Folkins has traced Disney's approach to the girl next door trope on a trajectory leading to *Lizzie McGuire* star, Hilary Duff, in the early 2000s. Folkins argues that

> The similarities between Annette [Funicello] and Hilary [Duff] are remarkable.

> Both Disney starlets found themselves in the limelight after the overnight success of their hit Disney television programs, and in many ways Disney crafted both of their celebrity personas, which marketed a fantasy that they were almost as ordinary as the fans who loved them. (Folkins)

Much of the panic over whether or not Disney Channel stars are or can be positive role models for younger girls stems from the tensions produced between the girl next door trope, normative discourses of adolescent girlhood, and the publicness of celebrity girls' lives—representations and experiences that are fluid, contradictory, and sexual as well as being sexualized. While close readings of Miley Cyrus, Raven-Symoné, and Selena Gomez as stars are essential to this project, attention must also be paid to the significance of young girl audiences to these Disney franchises.

Girls as a Media Market

Cultural production aimed at female youth dates back to the 1930s (Schrum *Some Wore* 15), but the "tween" girl market developed in the 1990s as a distinct and lucrative niche for media producers to target in addition to their teen audiences. Since the late twentieth century, tween girl audiences have been targeted by Hollywood because they are seen as avid consumers who influence their families' purchases and habits, they are repeat viewers, susceptible to word-of-mouth advertising, and films produced for them generally are much less expensive to make, expanding profit margins for studios (Tally). Gayle Wald has revealed the cynicism of those promulgating the notion of tween girls as a lucrative market. Marketers and media executives have been known to conflate "girlhood" with leisure and consumerism, constructing girls, in the 1990s, as an "emerging" market capable of boosting revenues for films and other media that speak to

them primarily as consumers (Wald *Clueless* 120). During that time, children's television networks, most notably Nickelodeon, also began their concentrated appeals to tween girl audiences by producing original series for and about tween girlhood (Banet-Weiser "Girls Rule"; *Kids Rule*).

In addition to studying how tween girls have been targeted by certain themes and representations of women and girls in popular U.S. cinema, Tally has also argued for an understanding of the economic function of the tween girl media market. Tally acknowledges the initiative taken first by the U.S. music industry and then by children's television networks to address this burgeoning target market of girls anywhere from age eight to age fourteen (though she does add that, for media industries, eleven- and twelve-year-old girls generally form the late end of the tween spectrum, with thirteen- and fourteen-year-old girls being outliers).

> Tween girls were responsible for propelling such stars as Britney Spears, the Backstreet Boys, and 'NSync to superstardom. Television companies also decided that tweens were a sufficiently 'real' group to merit special programming, and the Disney Channel and Nickelodeon have devoted a good portion of their television line-up to them. (Tally 312)

Tally's attention to the ways in which media companies worked to attract tween girl audiences in the early twenty-first century is a significant intervention for theories of pre-adolescent girlhood and media industries.

Understanding the diversity of girls' interactions with stardom and celebrity culture, as well as with the texts and products targeting them, is also important to theorizations of girls' media culture. Erin Meyers argues that

> the celebrity persona is more than false value, rather it is a site of tension and ambiguity in which an active audience has the space to make meaning of their world by accepting or rejecting the social values embodied by a celebrity image. ("Can You" 891)

As sites of tension, stars/celebrities and media texts offer opportunities for fan identification and identity transformation. For example, Jackie Stacey has categorized multiple forms of star-fan identification, commenting on the striking "diversity of processes of identification, including forms of desire," found in her influential study of women's letters about their fandom of female film stars (159). In addition, she points out the importance of approaching women's interactions with stars through their "extra-cinematic" experiences of them. For the women in her study, "[extra-cinematic identification] was one of the most written-about aspects of the relationship between stars and audiences" (Stacey 159). Similarly, girl fans of Disney Channel programs also compile knowledge about their favorite stars and their work beyond the channel, communicating with stars (now via online social media networks), and imitating their styles of dress and make-up in ways also described by the women in Stacey's study. Focusing on girls and young women, Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber find that girls' interactions with popular culture have historically taken the form of image consumption in the private spaces of the home—particularly in their bedrooms, college dormitories, and apartments. McRobbie and Garber's essay, "Girls and Subcultures," inspired feminist scholars to turn toward girls' culture and helped to generate the field of girls' studies. Their analysis of girls' engagements with cultural artifacts importantly points out the subversive potential of a girl's gaze and the need to consider girls as active, rather than

passive consumers. Yet, as Kearney argues, girls also *produce* culture in and beyond their bedrooms (*Girls Make*; "Productive Spaces"; "Coalescing").

Lisa Lewis's *Gender Politics and MTV: Voicing the Difference* delineates the emergence of female-oriented textual address in the 1980s on the cable television network, MTV, which is also aimed at young audiences, though generally it targets teens rather than tweens. Lewis is especially interested in the female artists promoted by the channel, including Cyndi Lauper and Madonna, and the young female audiences and "wannabe" fans eventually targeted. She analyzes specific music videos, featured musicians, and fan practices in her case studies to interrogate the role of MTV in the production (and reproduction) of female-oriented textual address in music videos. For Lewis, MTV blurred the boundaries that had been erected between rock ideology, which privileges forms of masculinist authenticity, and pop music, whose expressiveness and female address have garnered intense forms of fandom from adolescent girls.

> The girls who became intense fans did so not only because fandom was a way to show their avid support of their favorite female musician, but because fan activity enabled them to use female-address textuality in their everyday lives and to formulate their own responses to the experience of gender inequality. (Lewis 150)

In addition to adolescent girls' ability to incorporate fandom into their everyday experiences, Lewis also argues that "the recognition of [girls'] role in supporting stars and industrial textual products must be exhilarating," in comparison to the daily manipulation, regulation, and scrutiny imposed upon them (163). Lewis's analysis of the Madonna and Cyndi Lauper "wannabes," then, is useful for thinking through contemporary girls' emulation of celebrity dress, especially in Chapter three of this

dissertation which focuses on Disney's character-based, star-promoted fashion lines for tween girls. As Lewis argues, girls' imitation and appropriation of the styles of their favorite pop stars function as forms of empowered girlhood such that girls embrace their agency to alter the popular media marketplace by consuming or appropriating cultural products that address them as girls.

While this dissertation does not employ ethnographic methods, there are several such studies of girls' reception practices that are useful to an understanding of tween girls' celebrity emulation, fandom, and interactions as a consumer media market. Scholarship by Dafna Lemish, Melanie Lowe, Sarah Baker, and Tiina Vares and Sue Jackson, among others, provides insight into early adolescent and/or tween girl fans' interpretation, deconstruction, and reproduction of popular images and music. Researching girls' complex reception of pop star Britney Spears, for instance, Lowe argues that, "meaning is constantly negotiated and highly dependent on context of consumption and identity of consumer" (Lowe 123). The girls in her study embrace their identity as the target audience for teen pop music as a way of maintaining their feminist convictions while also enjoying the music and music videos that may contradict their politics (Lowe). Similarly, Baker reveals that "girls' engagement with the images in [Britney] Spears' online photo gallery, and their associated embodied play as the pop star, both tested and confirmed (tacit) familial, cultural, and societal boundaries understood by the girls as constituting 'growing up girl'" ("Playing Online" 178). Baker's research also challenges taboos regarding pre-teen girls' sexuality by investigating young girls' interactions with pornographic content online and with each

other in reaction to that content, suggesting that these interactions should be understood in terms of Bourdieu's concept of habitus[4] ("Playing Online" 185). Her work connects girls' imitative performances of pop music, popular dance, and celebrity personas with broader discourses of pre-adolescent girlhood in order to call attention to the role of performance in girls' identity formation. Of particular relevance to my studies of Miley Cyrus and Hannah Montana (primarily in Chapters one and two), Vares and Jackson find that tween girls negotiate their identities through celebrity knowledge, using Miley Cyrus' star image as a primary site at which girls appropriate "slut discourse" as a strategy of resistance. Rather than identify with certain aspects of what they see as Miley Cyrus' "real" personality or appearance as a "slut," the girls in their study understand Cyrus in opposition to her performances of the "good girl" Hannah Montana, whom they find to be a more readily acceptable role model ("Media 'Sluts'").

While the perspectives of girl fans clearly are significant to the formation and maintenance of girls as stars, media industries envision girl audiences as consumer markets, first and foremost. Like Miley Cyrus, Disney Channel Mouseketeer-turned-pop-star, Britney Spears, remains a compelling case study for understanding girl audiences from this industrial perspective. For instance, in her talk, "Adolescent Girls and the Homospectatorial Gaze: Queering Teen Pop Culture," Meenakshi Gigi Durham is particularly concerned with Spears as a young female performer with a young female fan following. There she explores the queer potential of girl icons for their fans. In her

[4] For Pierre Bourdieu, "habitus" refers to the everyday practices and experiences that help to define social groups and individual subjectivity. Habitus, as a counterpoint to the concept of rationality, is formed by lifestyle, values, schemata, sensibilities, and tastes and is sustained by shared history and memory (Bourdieu).

estimation, it is female adolescence that allows for girls' distinctive modes of reception, which help make stars and/or celebrities of Spears and others like her. "[T]he young girls whose gazes are the commercial impetus behind the stardom of Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera, Shakira, and other contemporary female teen idols are being positioned by the texts in ways that destabilize . . . gendered viewing conventions" (Durham 9). Not only do girls form the "impetus" for Spears' commodification, but her overt sexualization—which, as Sheila Whiteley has written, is also aimed at male audiences (58)–positions them for non-normative readings of her performances.

Studies like those discussed above that foreground girls' media use, examine media texts created for girl audiences, and/or attempt to address the significance of girl stars and girl target markets, all work to subvert the trivialization and oversimplification of girls' media culture and reception often apparent in cultural criticism. Though all the work discussed in this review of literature poses questions that have been useful to my project, they have been most helpful in collectively illuminating some points at which scholarship is lacking. For instance, while there continue to be insightful ethnographic studies of girls' fandom, media production, and consumer practices, there is very little theorization of how media industries generate and represent girls' interactions with media products and texts. The following section explores The Walt Disney Company in relation to television and, specifically, television produced for and about girls, with attention to the resurgence of a teen girl media market and the development of the tween girl media market from the 1990s forward.

METHODOLOGIES

The Disney Channel franchises and stars foregrounded in Chapters one, two, and four of this dissertation are *That's So Raven* (2003-2007) starring Raven-Symoné, *Hannah Montana* (2006-2011) starring Miley Cyrus, and *Wizards of Waverly Place* (2007-2012) starring Selena Gomez. These series and their stars were chosen for this project because they offer distinct representations of fictional girlhoods and ways of negotiating fame and visibility. In addition, each of the series has produced a lucrative and popular girl-driven transmedia franchise with extraordinary merchandizing and licensing potential, exploited by the Walt Disney Company. Each, then, has its own implications for how audiences may come to understand contemporary girlhood(s) and celebrity culture in the U.S. *That's So Raven* launched Raven-Symoné into teen stardom and is the only majority Black-cast sitcom to air on Disney Channel as of 2013.[5] The successful diversification of the *That's So Raven* brand into a variety of licensed product lines for tween girls is now seen as an important precursor (along with the popular, but short-lived *Lizzie McGuire* (2001-2004) franchise before it) to the even larger and more lucrative *Hannah Montana* franchise that followed. *Hannah Montana* was a record-breaking success that led to the promotion of other girl-driven franchises in quick succession, including *Wizards of Waverly Place*, whose representations of Latina and mixed-race girlhood help to illuminate the network's privileging of ethnic ambiguity and colorblind racial formations. Further, in Chapter four, Gomez is a particularly useful case

[5] One possible exception, Disney's *The Famous Jett Jackson* (1998-2001), featured an African-American protagonist with several recurring African-American friends and family members, but also multiple recurring White friends and acquaintances.

study for discussing celebrity girls' citizenship and entrepreneurism beyond Disney Channel. Chapter three focuses less on star images or Disney Channel series than the other chapters. Instead, it illustrates the significance of fashion and dress to the expansion of Disney franchises by exploring one of the most notable ways in which those franchises have been swiftly and successfully expanded into lifestyle branding for tween girl consumers. The case studies most relevant to this exploration of the franchises are the promotion of the first *D-Signed* fashion line, based on Demi Lovato's character Sonny Munro from another relatively short-lived series, *Sonny with a Chance* (Marmel et al. 2009-2011), and the more recent expansion of the collection of everyday fashion lines to incorporate dancewear in association with the popular series *Shake It Up* (2010-present). These fashion lines are most significant in that they are the result of Disney's efforts to produce and promote a proprietary tween fashion collection that aims to exploit girls' emulation of their favorite television stars and characters.

In order to explore the issues of representation raised by Disney Channel series, their respective stars' negotiations of fame on and beyond Disney Channel, and the marketing strategies increasingly taken up to expand these and other girl-driven Disney franchises, I take a discursive and ideological approach to textual analysis of the series, franchise promotional videos and events, the stars' music videos, live performances, civic engagement, interviews, and social media use (via Twitter and YouTube, specifically). I use a purposeful sampling of episodes from the duration of the three primary shows' four seasons, chosen for their representations of girlhood, specifically in relation to labor, money, consumerism, celebrity, femininity, age, race, regional identity, socioeconomic

class, interpersonal relationships, and sexuality. Each chapter of this dissertation incorporates analysis of stardom and celebrity on and beyond Disney Channel, employing a purposeful sampling of pop music performances, interviews, promotional appearances, and social media participation, focusing on those that generate or respond to public outcry, scrutiny, and policing of girl stars' bodies, sexualities, femininities, and age-appropriateness. This analysis takes the project outside the boundaries of Disney Channel in order to flesh out the relationships between celebrity visibility, femininity, race, sexuality, and age in the larger postfeminist media culture. By taking a qualitative approach to this variety of texts, I consider them as "an indeterminate field of meaning" which requires interpretation, rather than as "closed, segmented object[s] with determinate, composite meanings" (Larsen 122). As I conduct my interpretive work, I also aim to make clear the assumptions and allegiances that frame this research. (I discuss the analytical frameworks that guide my analyses, below under the heading "Theoretical Perspective.")

In addition to closely reading these texts and star images, I explore the discursive and economic strategies used by the Walt Disney Company—Disney Channel and Disney Consumer Products in particular—to construct an understanding of girlhood and girls' celebrity. The Walt Disney Company has been notoriously difficult to research directly as its personnel attempt to control the company's public image. Therefore, it is important to analyze the constructions and images of girlhood put forth by Disney in press releases and the trade press to provide an illustration of the construction(s) of girlhood in which Disney has become invested. Similarly, it is useful to analyze the

trades and reports regarding Disney's annual profits for an understanding of what the conglomerate gains from such an investment. These more industry-focused aspects of this dissertation require exhaustive research in relevant publications, such as *Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter*, and in the reports and press releases issued by and about Disney Channel, from the 1990s (when Disney Channel began producing original programming) to the present, for the ways in which they discuss their talent and audiences as "tweens," teens, adolescents, and/or girls. The industry focus of this dissertation also has resulted in less attention paid to Disney stars' and products' presence in girls' publications such as *Seventeen* and *Teen Vogue*. I have, however, tried to refer to stars' interviews within those magazines wherever relevant, especially in Chapters two and four. In addition to publically available annual reports and press releases produced by the Disney Company, this project benefits from another scholar's experience at a Disney industry seminar. Alisa Perren attended the 38th annual International Radio and Television Society (IRTS) Foundation's Faculty/Industry Seminar held at the Walt Disney Company Worldwide Headquarters in Burbank, California, August 10-11, 2009. Perren has generously shared her transcribed notes of the event at which several Disney television producers spoke about the history of Disney's television production, Disney Channel talent, audiences, content, and merchandising efforts. I refer to this event throughout the dissertation as "the IRTS Seminar," and find the notes useful for getting at the particular language used by Disney personnel to promote a certain view of the conglomerate to industry professionals and academics.[6] Discursive analysis of these documents helps to clarify how and why

[6]The theme of the seminar was: "Disney Channels Worldwide: Leadership and Influence in the Global

Disney Channel has targeted girls over the past two decades, how girl performers and girl audiences function in the economic structure of the company, and what the brand's strategies are for future content.

In his recent book, *Media Franchising: Creative License and Collaboration in the Culture Industries*, Derek Johnson argues effectively for a critical confluence of cultural studies and political economy approaches to the study of media franchises. He explores the industrial and cultural relationships generated in and through franchise production, recognizing participatory consumers, as well as creative professionals, and corporate executives as vested stakeholders in media franchise production. For him, the franchise should be considered "less in terms of unified brands and singular corporate interests, but instead as contested grounds of collaborative creativity where networked stakeholders have negotiated the ongoing generation, exchange, and use of shared cultural resources" (Johnson 7). Following his approach, this dissertation purposefully envisions girl stars and girl consumer audiences as media franchise producers who interact with, sustain, and grow franchised media and products often envisioned instead as the sole property of media conglomerates and their executive personnel. While the girl stars in this study may be easily understood as creative producers in light of their contractual obligations to the Disney Company, it is imperative that the girl audiences and consumers targeted by their franchises also be considered as laborers within the media franchise matrix. Further, this project takes up a call made by John Thornton Caldwell to move in a theoretical direction "that keeps the constraining assumptions (formation of power and control ethos) in

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Marketplace."

constant tension with the enabling perspectives (agency and collective action presupposed by performance theories" (71). In this way, girlhood can be positioned as a series of performances that occur both within and beyond the control of the Disney conglomerate. While I am interested in Disney's construction of tween girls as audiences and issues of agency in girls' media consumption, this dissertation does not incorporate a study of girls' reception. Rather, I explore how the Disney Company, as a networked corporate entity, understands and envisions contemporary girls and girlhoods, in order to. Accordingly, each of the chapters of this dissertation analyzes girl stars' shifting industrial identities with attention to the economic significance of girl fans and audiences within those stars' Disney franchises.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

My adherence to a discursive and ideological approach to textual analysis is rooted in Foucaultian conceptualizations of discourse and power, such that discourse allows for the dissemination of socially constructed concepts and ideals, which wield cultural power and knowledge just as they generate sites of resistance. Cultural power is best understood, here, in the Gramscian sense of the functions of hegemony and the Althusserian concept of ideologies, which are many and fluid—constantly changing and challenged, yet inescapable. Through this framework, I analyze discourses of girlhood at the intersections of socioeconomic class, and contemporary ideals of femininity, race and ethnicity, and age.

I take a constructivist approach to locating meanings in media representations. That is, I understand representation as "a practice, a kind of 'work', which uses material

objects and effects . . .” and culminates in “the production of meaning through language” (Hall “The Work” 25, 28). In relation to popular media, meaning is conveyed through spoken and visual discourses that produce multiple interpretations. Therefore, while my analyses of representations stem from my own interpretations of meaning, I find it necessary also to complicate these readings by exploring the polysemy of the texts and the potential for different hegemonic, oppositional, and negotiated readings. This research, then, follows cultural perspectives on issues of representation and mediated discourse, deriving a theoretical foundation more directly from feminist girls’ media scholarship regarding contemporary cultural constructions of femininity, feminisms, and youth.

In the literature reviews above, I have discussed my perspective regarding postfeminist discourse, but I want to clarify what I mean when I attribute my analysis to a feminist theoretical perspective. Here, I am most invested in female-centered media content, female-oriented media address, performances of femininity, social constructs of gender, and the relationships between popular notions of (and reactions to) feminism and representations of gender. Recognizing the intricacies of intersecting identity politics, this dissertation will explore the functions of youth, race and ethnicity, and class privilege in the discourses of girls foregrounded in the sample texts. As such, my perspective could be referred to as a “Third Wave” feminist one. While scholars have contested the oversimplification of feminisms into a few “waves” and continue to debate the definitive tenets of each “wave” and its attendant feminist perspectives, “Third Wave” feminism has been accepted as a movement distinguishable from the “Second Wave” (i.e. the

Women's Liberation Movement). "Third Wave" feminism has also been conflated with conceptualizations of postfeminism. In the context of my research, a "Third Wave" feminist perspective refers to a focus on intersecting identity politics, critical attention to popular culture (especially media), an awareness of shifting power dynamics and emerging forms of subjectivity, and an understanding of gender as fluid and performative. Judith Butler has theorized gender in this way, expanding on Simone de Beauvoir's oft-cited assertion that "[o]ne is not born, but rather, becomes a woman" (De Beauvoir 301). For Butler:

> [G]ender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. ("Performative Acts" 519)

My analysis of constructions of femininity in relation to celebrity and visibility rely heavily on this notion of everyday performances of identities and the surveillance and "stylization" work of gendering practices. My perspective as a feminist researcher is also applicable to the industry research portions of this project.

As I focus on the discourses of girlhood and femininity employed in the work of sustaining one of the largest media conglomerates in the world, my theoretical framework remains within the realm of the feminist motives discussed above. Additionally, I incorporate into that perspective a particular understanding of U.S. media conglomeration. Such conglomeration can be understood as part of the operation of a particularly privileged global patriarchy. "The dominant global forces at work are

capitalist, masculine, white, western, middle-class, heterosexual, urban, and highly mobile" (Hawthorne 32). As a conglomerate that produces extremely popular media texts targeted to and featuring girls, Disney relies, in part, on the exploitation of girls and girlhood to grow and sustain its position as one of the Big Six global media conglomerates. Disney must, therefore, be theorized in relation to discourses of postfeminist culture and girlhood, but with a clear understanding of how the company's use of girlhood and girls might privilege masculinist commercial media conglomeration and patriarchy.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

The first chapter of this dissertation, "'Shine Like a Star': Visibility, Performance, and the Postfeminist Sensibility in Disney's Girl-Driven Franchises," establishes the broad, intersecting cultural discourses that frame the subsequent chapters. Girls' visibility and contemporary discourses of performance, luminosity, celebrity, youth, individualism, and femininity are key. This chapter brings together these discourses, using ideological, narrative, and discursive analysis of *Hannah Montana* as well as Miley Cyrus' rise to fame as a mini case study. This particular program and the success of its star set new standards for Disney's girl-centered franchise media and lifestyle branding. In addition, statements made by Disney personnel and talent in popular and trade press help to substantiate a preferred construction of girlhood within Disney media for girls. *Hannah Montana* and Cyrus exemplify the intersection of all these discourses in the Disney children's entertainment empire. Following work by Mary Celeste Kearney regarding the luminous aesthetics of postfeminist girlhood ("Sparkle"),

Chapter one asks: In what ways do Disney's popular girl-focused media franchises rely on girls' luminosity to construct an idealized postfeminist girlhood? Analyses of the franchises and stars in the chapters that follow reveal how the dominant, often hegemonic, discourses introduced in this chapter may or may not shift to exploit a wider audience and talent of color and to allow for expanded lifestyle branding inspired by Disney Channel characters.

In the second chapter, "'True Colors': Race, Ethnicity, and Class Status in Disney Stardom and Disney Channel Series," I complicate the previous chapter's focus on representations of girlhood on *Hannah Montana* with regard to its convoluted constructions of race, regional identity, class status and taste distinctions, and a problematic desire for ethnic differentiation within the context of post-race and color-blind ideologies. And, although whiteness is normalized in this and many other Disney Channel programs, there are also significant exceptions in which non-White casts and characters are privileged and in which racial and cultural difference are even foregrounded, once or twice. In particular, *That's So Raven* and *Wizards of Waverly Place* are two of the most popular series to spawn diversified franchises, and both focus on teen girl characters of color. While a few scholars have written about *Wizards of Waverly Place* and its star, Selena Gomez, *That's So Raven* has received even more limited critical attention. Yet *That's So Raven* is arguably very significant both as a potential site of identification for non-White girl audiences and also as a proving ground for the franchise diversification that would only grow with subsequent Disney Channel series. The *That's So Raven* franchise helped pave the way to popularity and financial

success as the Disney Company streamlined its franchise marketing and diversification strategies. Finally, *Wizards of Waverly Place* represents Disney Channel's efforts to generate Latina/o audiences, while simultaneously normalizing Whiteness.

While this chapter focuses on the intersections of gender, age, class, and race and ethnicity within these three series, I also consider critical and popular reception of the girl performers that star in the series, since their star images become inseparable from their characters and the merchandising and promotion of their franchises. The complexity of the role of the star in driving these girl-centered franchises is often ignored in popular press, entertainment trades, and scholarly criticism. Through various forms of labor, many of which are rendered invisible as feminine, affective labors often are—although, especially for girls, they rely on public visibility—Raven-Symoné (Raven-Symoné Christina Pearson, alternately known also as Raven), Selena Gomez, and Miley Cyrus give life to these franchises, hail audiences, nurture fan-bases, create media content, and actively market their franchises and the parent company. In this chapter, then, critical analysis of statements by Disney personnel and performers in popular press and trade publications augment close readings of selected episodes of the three series. The primary question that guides this chapter is: how might these representations complicate Disney's construction of an idealized, economically privileged, White postfeminist girlhood?

A departure from focused analysis of particular Disney Channel episodes and the three series analyzed in the other chapters, Chapter three, "*D-Signed* for Girls: Disney Channel, Lifestyle Branding, and Tween Fashion Culture," explores the introduction and subsequent expansion of Disney's *D-Signed* fashion collection for tween girls. The

development of this collection marks an unprecedented expansion of synergistic marketing strategies targeting the tween girl market in the U.S. This chapter is dedicated to exploring the promotion of fashion culture and consumer products for girls, particularly via texts that have circulated online. The launch and continued promotion of *D-Signed* fashion lines on Disney's own YouTube.com channel, Disney Living (established in 2009), on Disney.com and on StarDoll.com call attention to the ways in which this media conglomerate employs the Internet as a site for developing and sustaining television audiences as also consumers of a multiplicity of other Disney texts, paratexts, experiences and products.

This chapter works to extend discussions of the Disney Company's efforts at franchise expansion and diversification in ways not fully addressed in the other chapters. In addition, Chapter three opens up the dissertation to incorporate discussion of girl stars other than Raven-Symoné, Miley Cyrus, and Selena Gomez. Here, I analyze promotional videos circulated online and via corporate press releases and their deployment of stars Demi Lovato, Zendaya, and Bella Thorne, as well as analyzing the clothing in the "Sonny Munroe" and "CeCe & Rocky" fashion lines and their relevance to the Disney Channel characters and narratives that inspire them. This chapter expands the sample of this dissertation to include two more Disney Channel series and their stars—*Shake It Up* and *Sonny with a Chance*. Commentary on Demi Lovato's role as a "lapsed" (or "failed and recuperated") Disney star and the "lost potential" of her short-lived career on the network may have necessitated the swift development of additional fashion lines and characters to fill the void left when neither she nor *Sonny with a Chance* returned for a third season. In

addition, Lovato is often positioned in popular discourse as the "other" Latina Disney Channel star, relative to Selena Gomez, whose accomplishments and celebrity are discussed more fully in Chapters two and four.

I begin Chapter three with an examination of how Disney Consumer Products (DCP), Target, and Disney Channel personnel speak about girlhood and fashion culture. Next, I analyze the Demi Lovato music video used to launch the initial *D-Signed* Sonny Munroe fashion line and a video recording of the fashion show held at the D23 Expo in 2011, circulated on the Disney Living YouTube channel to promote the 2012 "CeCe & Rocky" *D-signed* line. These videos, the clothes, and the promotional commentary regarding the *D-Signed* collection warrant critical attention as they exemplify Disney's evolving marketing techniques and may operate as sites of production for conventions of femininity and Western ideals of contemporary girlhood. Thus, this chapter asks, how might the *D-Signed* fashion collection function, discursively and economically, as a site for the reproduction and performance of a form of idealized tween girlhood? And how does the promotion of fashion lines affiliated with Disney Channel programs function within the larger Disney children's entertainment empire?

Returning to a focus on Raven-Symoné, Miley Cyrus, and Selena Gomez, Chapter four, "Outgrowing Disney Channel: Celebrity Girls' Citizenship and Entrepreneurism," this chapter will delineate the potential implications of girls' visibility as producers of contemporary U.S. commercial media. In this chapter, I employ discursive analysis of Disney's corporate citizenship campaigns and Disney stars' self-branding initiatives as each continues not only to work at producing acting vehicles for herself, but also to invest

in the project of supporting and "empowering" girls in need through charitable donations of time, money, and celebrity status. In an era of increasing exploitation of youthful femininity that can position girls as postfeminist subjects in the neoliberal order, this chapter constitutes an exploration of what it might mean to envision girls as entertainment moguls and entrepreneurs in relation to expanded global franchising and systems of media conglomeration dominated by patriarchal hierarchies and capitalist profit motives.

In addition to advancing their entertainment careers, each of the stars has also participated, to varying degrees, in public service projects, philanthropic organizations, and activist efforts. The Walt Disney Company requires a certain level of civic engagement of its talent, contracting them to appear in Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and promotions. The question guiding this chapter is twofold. First, as girls' roles as media producers continue to be marginalized and girl audiences continue to be seen as niche market demographics, how do we make sense of these girls' entrepreneurial efforts that may be very much in keeping with the dominant, commercial systems of media production, distribution, and reception from which their fame originates? And second, how might civic participation factor in the development of these celebrity identities and how might it work to legitimize their visibility, during a time when they are increasingly sexualized and vilified because of it?

Finally, the Conclusion of this dissertation offers commentary on the limitations of the research and suggests possibilities for future study. This section gestures toward future projects and potential publications that may develop in greater detail one or more

of the trajectories begun in the previous chapters by raising questions left unaddressed there. For instance, there is much space yet for queer theorizations of Disney Channel characters as the programs discussed throughout this project are rich sites for cross-gender and gender-queer identifications and characterizations. It also would be useful to explore the cultural and political implications of the Disney Company's expansion of television services and content across the globe, especially in relation to the symbol of the "global girl," conceptualized by McRobbie, who becomes a site of increased attention and signifies a variety of meanings in developing nations where the Disney Company has a growing presence. Rather than summarizing the arguments made in the previous chapters, then, in the Conclusion I look ahead to the future of this and related projects.

Chapter 1: "Shine Like a Star": Visibility, Performance, and the Postfeminist Sensibility in Disney Channel's Girl-Driven Franchises[7]

INTRODUCTION

Shake It Up (2010-present), a popular Disney Channel sitcom about two girls who get a chance to pursue their dream of being professional dancers on television, relies heavily on girls' increased cultural visibility in the U.S. since the 1990s. Through its luminous aesthetics, rhetoric of stardom, and an incitement to perform in a variety of capacities, the program and its related promotions, fashion lines, merchandise, competitions, and other paratexts address their audiences as young, empowered, feminine, consuming subjects. The program is rife with the performative rhetoric and luminous imagery that earned *Hannah Montana* (2006-2011) its record-breaking popularity on the same network just a few years previously. For example, the lighted marquee that proclaims the title *Shake It Up* demands that viewers "Shake It Up," suggesting a compulsion to perform, to act out or act up, to make oneself visible—in this case, to get noticed through creative dress, movement, and ambition. The *Shake It Up* marquee graphic is multi-colored, polished to a shine, glittering at the corners, and angled to suggest three-dimensionality. It often looms over a hazy city skyline or appears over the similarly lighted stage used on the show within this show, called *Shake It Up Chicago*. The sign is usually accompanied by the show's two energetic, beaming,

[7] Some of the arguments made in this chapter will be published in the September 2013 issue of *Feminist Media Studies* as part of my article titled "The Best of Both Worlds? Youth, gender, and a postfeminist sensibility in Disney's *Hannah Montana*."

dancing protagonists, Rocky Blue (played by Zendaya) and CeCe Jones (Bella Thorne)—a duo that rivals Hannah Montana in luminosity, girly-ness, and performing talent.

Although the *Hannah Montana* logo is not meant to represent a show within the show as *Shake It Up*'s does, the word "Hannah" sparkles and shines and glows with innumerable yellow and white stage lights above "Montana" in purple, making its title also look a bit like a theater marquee. The *Shake It Up* title logo works as an even richer branding graphic than the one for *Hannah Montana*. It foregrounds visibility, luminosity, and performance relative to girlhood in ways that the *Hannah Montana* name may not appear able to. As I argue below, however, the character of Hannah Montana comes to embody girlhood visibility, luminosity, and performance, making her name, in retrospect, possibly even more performative in nature than the demand to "Shake It Up." The title graphic is not the only sparkling, luminous presence in either show. In *Shake It Up*, Rocky and CeCe are often featured—as Hannah was before them—wearing shiny or sparkling fabrics, make-up, and accessories. In addition, Rocky and CeCe's bubbly, quick-witted, fast-paced and often physical humor ensures that they get attention. The sparkling title graphic, the performative representations of girlhood, and the representations of girls' entertainment performances in *Shake It Up* make it a striking recent example of Disney's strategy first successfully mobilized with *Hannah Montana* and Miley Cyrus in 2006. Both series' characters, costumes, and graphics are exemplary of the increasing use of sparkle and shine and incitements to perform in Disney products and texts, as well as more broadly in U.S. girls' culture.

There is an undeniable link between the visual aesthetics of shine on Disney Channel shows and Disney's rhetorical and material incitements for girls to perform—to celebrate their luminous visibility. The related discourses of visibility, luminosity, performance, and celebrity have become integral to contemporary notions of successful, postfeminist, "can-do" girlhood, in part as a result of Disney's efforts to target tween girls. As I argue throughout this dissertation, these discourses converge in a variety of ways to reproduce ideal contemporary girlhood as a particularly postfeminist subject position. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which the Walt Disney Company employs the rhetoric of performance, stardom, and celebrity in conjunction with luminous aesthetics to attract girl consumer audiences and to represent girlhood. While this chapter focuses on the *Hannah Montana* franchise originating on Disney Channel, it also functions to contextualize Disney Channel's use of luminosity, performance, and celebrity discourse within the larger Walt Disney conglomerate—particularly in relation to Disney animated feature films and the subsequent development of the Princess Court franchise and the Fairies franchise, as well as other Disney Channel series such as *Shake It Up*.

METHODS & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Throughout this dissertation, I refer to girls and girlhood in a variety of contexts, but it is important to distinguish between discursive subject positions of girlhood and girls' embodiment and experiences. My primary concern in this chapter is with the shifting construction of girlhood as a subject position and therefore as a discursive construct in popular media culture targeting girls. Actual girls make up the target market

for the franchise under discussion, and actual girls are the performers who become aspirational guides or models for those targeted girls. The Disney Company takes every opportunity to blur the boundaries between girl audiences and girl performers. Actual girls are a significant influence on the construction of ideals of girlhood and are, therefore, ever-present in this discussion of subjectivity. When discussing the Disney girl target audience, I refer to the "tween" girl market, girls ages 8-14. Miley Cyrus and other Disney Channel girl performers—with the notable exception of Raven-Symoné who was 15 when she began starring in *That's So Raven*—also fall into that category as members of the tween girl demographic targeted by their series, at least in the early seasons, though they usually play teenaged characters. I have adopted the industry rhetoric of demographics, here, in order to define the *Hannah Montana* audience according to age and gender. But as I will show, the aesthetics of the series and its paratexts also privilege White, middle- to upper-class, heteronormative girlhood. Further, it is more useful to consider both discursive and actual girlhoods as fluid and shifting, rather than bound by age categories or physiological phases, which also shift.

This chapter takes as its primary case study Disney Channel's hit series, *Hannah Montana* and the girl performer driving its success as a franchise, Miley Cyrus. My many incidental viewings of Disney Channel programs that foreground pre-teen and teen girl characters, and are popular with "tween" girl audiences, have resulted in a purposeful sampling of episodes of *Hannah Montana* as exemplary of the early 2000s' convergence of girls' visibility, luminous aesthetics, and the rhetoric of performance in popular and lucrative Disney Channel series. Performance and issues of visibility are significant focal

points for this series, making it particularly well suited as an object of discursive and ideological textual analysis for this chapter. In addition, as much as this chapter can work to set up the chapters that follow, it introduces one of the Disney Channel franchises that contributes to the ongoing discussion of the transmedia manifestations of postfeminist girlhood throughout this dissertation. Most important, this series has been a vehicle for Miley Cyrus, who was the first to achieve the form of franchise-able stardom attempted by Disney Channel on behalf of her predecessors Hilary Duff and Raven-Symoné and increasingly expected of and available to girls who appear on Disney Channel today. In addition to relevant episodes of *Hannah Montana*, in this chapter I also begin to consider the rhetoric of performance, celebrity, and girlhood espoused by Disney Channel producers and the stars of the show in interviews, promotional efforts, and press releases. These are rich sites for analyzing the ways in which girls are represented, discussed, and addressed by the Walt Disney Company.

I critique the feminist and postfeminist potential of the *Hannah Montana* franchise, its talent, and its target audience by considering them within the contexts of contemporary popular media industries in the U.S. and celebrity discourse in girls' culture. Visibility, luminosity, stardom, celebrity, and performance are the primary discourses that frame this chapter. They function symbiotically in Disney's decades-long history of nurturing girl performers, girl audiences, and girl-focused texts, but have become increasingly significant to the Disney children's entertainment empire as it expands during the first decades of the twenty-first century. Exploring the discursive and ideological constructions of girls as subjects, then, is also integral to this analysis.

Girlhood is, as Anita Harris, Sarah Projansky, and Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra have argued respectively, an ideal site for postfeminist subjectification (Harris *Future*; Projansky "Mass Magazine"; Tasker and Negra "Introduction"). The fashion-beauty complex (Bartky; McRobbie *The Aftermath*) as well as commercial media outlets have reproduced postfeminist girlhood as an aspirational fantasy, open to anyone, in denial of systemic inequalities.

Harris argues that "can-do" girlhood means "being smart, having power, and making the most of one's abilities," making good choices being the key to successful girlhood (*Future* 76). Angela McRobbie conceptualizes "young women of capacity" in much the same way Harris has described the "can-do" girl. As I argue below, the *Hannah Montana* franchise both celebrates and complicates this notion of idealized capable or "can-do" girlhood. Miley Cyrus, and the characters she plays in the series—Miley Stewart and Hannah Montana—come to represent independent, self-confident, over-achieving girls of capacity, but they are simultaneously subject to discourses of celebrity, which frequently take precedent over capability as the privileged discursive framework for girlhood within the Disney franchise juggernaut. For Harris, the "can-do" girl exhibits "flexibility and self-actualization," and her successes appear to be the result of her "good choices, effort, and ambition" (*Future* 16). For McRobbie, "Having a well-planned life emerges as a social norm of contemporary femininity" (*The Aftermath* 77). In contrast, celebrity and stardom are frequently represented as the result of mysterious forces, such as luck, discovery, and possession of "star quality," the "it" factor, or what Richard Dyer has called "charisma" (*Stars*). As such, the star's labor is often rendered invisible. The

premise of *Hannah Montana*—the blurring of the character's life with the life of the star—makes this text a rich example of the relationship between postfeminist girlhood and celebrity culture in commercial representations of girlhood, and it is extraordinarily useful, then, for theorizing postfeminist girlhood as constructed by Disney.

LUMINOSITIES AND THE POSTFEMINIST MASQUERADE

Expanding Michel Foucault's theorization of "visibilities," Gilles Deleuze conceptualizes "forms of luminosity" as a way to distinguish between objects "that show up under light" and forms that exist *as* light (or ways of being visible) (Deleuze 52). For Deleuze:

> Visibilities are not to be confused with elements that are visible or more generally perceptible, such as qualities, things, objects, compounds of objects. In this respect Foucault constructs a function that is no less original than that of the statement. We must break things open. Visibilities are not forms of objects, nor even forms that would show up under light, but rather forms of luminosity which are created by the light itself and allow a thing or object to exist only as a flash, sparkle or shimmer. (52)

Deleuze employs the term "luminosity" to clarify Foucault's earlier use of "visibilities," referring not to the simple fact of an object's visibility, but rather to the ways in which visibility functions. This distinction, between visible objects and luminous forms of visibility, is integral to understanding McRobbie's postfeminist masquerade, which she theorizes as a luminous subject position for young women. She finds that "The power [young women] seem to collectively be in possession of, is 'created by the light itself'" (*The Aftermath* 60; Deleuze 52). In *The Aftermath of Feminism*, McRobbie thus extends Deleuze's concept to refer to discursive subjectivities that can emerge from the following four "luminous spaces of attention" within postfeminist culture: "the fashion-beauty

complex," which produces the "postfeminist masquerade"; "education and employment," from which emerges the "working girl" figure; "sexuality, fertility, and reproduction," which produces the "phallic girl;" and "globalization," from which the "global girl" emerges (58-59). McRobbie's application of luminosities to young women is useful also as a way in which to theorize spaces of attention for girls—spaces and subject positions in which girls receive a high level of attention.

With the notable exception of the "global girl" figure, who is meant to represent rapid change in impoverished countries (still a Western-centric notion in need of complication), the female subjects of attention in McRobbie's luminous spaces are adults. The "working girl" figure is a young woman succeeding in the labor force or higher education—working toward a profession—rather than a girl partaking in mandatory schooling or even working instead or on the side to help support her family or earn discretionary income. The "phallic girl" refers to both a sexualized image of youthful womanhood and a sexually active young woman making choices about her reproductive and romantic life—albeit within the constraints of conventional, Western society. Within such societies, and perhaps especially in the U.S., adolescent and pre-adolescent girls are presented as sites of struggle over sexualization, not necessarily as autonomous, sexual beings. McRobbie's repeated elision of girls with young women, here, suggests that girls may take up these luminosities just as young women do, but we must acknowledge that girls do not have the same opportunities, rights, or resources that women have. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the relevance of luminosities specifically for girls—marginalized at least by their minor status and youth—to understand how discourses of

girlhood might alter these "spaces of attention" or produce their own (McRobbie *The Aftermath*).

I am particularly concerned here with the production of the postfeminist masquerade via the space of the fashion-beauty complex, which constitutes, to a large degree, the contemporary Western ideals of femininity, consumerism, and Whiteness. McRobbie defines the postfeminist masquerade as "a distinct modality of prescriptive feminine agency," and, therefore, a subject position for "women of capacity" who have access to the resources necessary to maintain conventionally feminine bodies and behaviors through fashion-beauty consumption (*The Aftermath* 58). These women are expected to support themselves financially through education and work, physically and emotionally through self-help, psychotherapy, dieting, and fitness routines, and socially by actively upholding what Judith Butler calls the "heterosexual matrix" (*Gender Trouble*). As I discuss in this dissertation's introduction, McRobbie elaborates on the heterosexual matrix to illustrate the presence of a "new sexual contract" between men and women in postfeminist culture (*The Aftermath* 57-58). In efforts to uphold heteronormative and traditional gender roles in the face of women's increasing visibility and success—or capacity—in the public sphere, women must "prioritise consumption for the sake of sexual intelligibility and in the name of heterosexual desire" (McRobbie *The Aftermath* 90). As women take up the accouterments of femininity in postfeminist culture, they engage also in processes of sexual self-objectification or "subjectification," as Rosalind Gill points out (*Gender*). Subjectification increasingly structures women's engagement with consumer culture such that a woman's effort toward sexual

intelligibility "intersects with and confirms the neoliberal turn . . . [toward] consumer-citizenship" (McRobbie *The Aftermath* 90). Consumption thus becomes the primary strategy for access to the postfeminist masquerade—for women as well as for girls.

For McRobbie, then, contemporary young women's power, exhibited via performances of the postfeminist masquerade of youthful femininity stems from their participation as consumers in the fashion-beauty industrial complex (*The Aftermath*). It is necessary, however, to also interject an awareness of the roles of media industries and celebrity culture in the proliferation of fashion and beauty conventions to analyze how the fashion-beauty complex hails girls and reproduces the postfeminist masquerade. Sandra Lee Bartky defines the fashion-beauty complex as follows:

> Like the "military-industrial complex," the fashion-beauty complex is a major articulation of capitalist patriarchy. [It] is a system of corporations—some of which manufacture products, others services and still others information, images, and ideologies—of emblematic public personages and of sets of techniques and procedures. As family and church have declined in importance as the central producers and regulators of "femininity," the fashion-beauty complex has grown. (Bartky 39)

The "information, images, and ideologies" produced within this complex suggest its reliance on media culture. Yet, while McRobbie's theory of postfeminism relies on analyses of popular media texts, she does not construct media industries as a possible space of one or more luminous subjectivities for women (or girls).

Discussed at length in the introduction to this dissertation, a few scholars contributing to the edited collection, *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*, argue convincingly that media culture is the dominant site of the mutual constitution of both girlhood and postfeminism. Girls' increasing cultural

visibility—as target markets, as "ideal subjects," as alternately "can-do" or "at-risk," and as vessels for social and political anxiety—is intimately tied to the development of contemporary postfeminist popular media culture which, as I argue below, provides another space of luminosity for girls (Harris *Future*; Projansky "Mass Magazine"). The symbiotic relationship between postfeminist culture and girls' visibility requires that the centralization of White, heterosexual, middle-class, adult working women in the neoliberal economy be problematized by discourses of contemporary girlhood(s) (Projansky "Mass Magazine"). Analyzing the structuring presence of intersecting identity discourses (i.e., discourses of age, class, sexuality, gender, ability, and race) in McRobbie's configuration of the postfeminist masquerade for young women means recognizing the ways in which emergent subjectivities may differ considerably for economically and socially dependent girls. Additionally, new feminine subjectivities, such as the postfeminist masquerade, may differ also for celebrity girls, whose privilege, power, and resistance are generated by increased demands for and exploitation of their visibility as girls within the media industrial complex. It is useful, then, to turn to aspects of girls' popular media culture to understand what it might mean to be a *girl* of capacity and to better understand where and how spaces of attention or luminosity exist for girls. Considering both the postfeminist masquerade and the concept of luminosities from the perspective of girls' media studies enables us to complicate these concepts to better understand the significance of age in the construction of postfeminist subject positions.

The aesthetic and rhetorical manifestations of luminosity discussed throughout this chapter are symptomatic of girls' emergent luminous subjectivities, which can be

understood in relation to the cultural luminosities structuring the lives of contemporary young women. Luminosity refers, in this chapter, to visibility, visual aesthetics, and the rhetoric of sparkle, shimmer, glitter, shine, and stardom in media and consumer products. McRobbie does not theorize luminosity via its material and aesthetic dimensions, but I find it useful to anchor my analysis within the realm of the consumable, material, and mediated manifestations of girls' luminosity in this way. By grappling with the rhetorical and aesthetic aspects of luminosity, I can more easily specify the ways in which popular girls' media culture reproduces idealized representations of postfeminist girlhood. While the postfeminist masquerade is defined by its emergence from women's relationship to the fashion-beauty complex, media industries demonstrate a growing interest in girl audiences and an increasing investment in girls' visibility. The Walt Disney Company, in particular, constructs spaces of luminosity for girls as active consumers and participants in the realms of popular media and celebrity culture—realms that overlap with McRobbie's spaces of attention, although they remain under-discussed. Sarah Projansky, Susan Hopkins, and Kathleen Sweeney have each explored the functions of girls' visibility in celebrity culture (Projansky *Spectacular*; Hopkins; Sweeney). With this chapter, I hope to add to the conversation they have started, by expanding McRobbie's notion of young women's luminosities to also include consideration of girls' visibility and celebrity in media culture within and beyond the fashion-beauty complex.[8]

[8] See Chapter four of this dissertation for an exploration of girls' participation in celebrity branding, social movements, and business ventures that are not exclusive to the fashion and beauty industries.

What follows in this chapter is an exploration of how the luminosity of the postfeminist masquerade is represented or exploited in girls' popular media—not entirely separate from the fashion-beauty complex, but relying also on media consumption. Below, I use the concept of the postfeminist masquerade to think through the ways in which the media industrial complex addresses girls. Specifically, I analyze the luminous aesthetics and discourses of performative luminosity in Disney's transmedia franchises with particular attention to the postfeminist, performance-oriented and performative, luminous visibility embodied by Miley Cyrus and her character Hannah Montana.

SPARKLE AND SHINE: DISNEY'S LUMINOUS AESTHETICS

The shine and sparkle of luminous aesthetics in Disney media both rely upon and enhance girls' visibility. These aesthetics demand further scholarly attention, since they appear ubiquitous in the media and consumer cultures of contemporary idealized girlhood. As Carol Dyhouse demonstrates in *Glamour: Women, History, Feminism*, luminous elements of feminine fashion and costume, such as glitter, jewels, and precious metals, have been significant to modern notions of glamour in Western cultures since at least the 1920s. But Mary Celeste Kearney finds that the early 2000s produced an exponential rise in the popularity and frequency of elements of glitter and sparkle, particularly in clothing and products for young girls ("Sparkle"). Rachel Moseley finds that historically, sparkling visuals and an audible "percussive sparkle on the soundtrack" are prevalent in popular narratives about magic and witchcraft that foreground female characters. She explores their use in teen media of the 1990s and 2000s, within what she

calls the "glamorous make-over" sequences in which the adolescent witch is transformed (Moseley).

> The glamorous sparkle—whether of eyes, teeth, cosmetics, or dress—is a conventional sign of femininity, but for teen witches it also signals the power made manifest as audiovisual effect, or spectacle. Herein lies the paradox of glamour . . . in the postfeminist project. (Moseley 408)

Notably, Moseley points out this use of luminous audiovisual aesthetics in ABC's *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996-2003), which was broadcast just one year after the Walt Disney Company took over ABC/Capital Cities. The rise in luminous aesthetics—the look of sparkle and glamour—spread from teen girls' shows like *Sabrina* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (The WB, UPN 1997-2003), to media and products targeting tween-aged girls with the crystallization of a tween girl consumer market in the early 2000s, grown from a barely addressed 1990s' niche to a multi-billion dollar consumer-base by the turn of the century. The *L.A. Times* reported in 2002 that "Glitter is everywhere . . . for the tween-age consumer," finding that tween clothing marketers use glitter to make "each item special and unique," thereby attempting to make girls feel special and unique (Henderson E4). Although, by this logic, there will be little to distinguish one girl from then next when every girl sparkles. We can hope that the collaborative, collective, empowered rhetoric of the riot grrrl movement or the "empowerment" rhetoric of 1990s' girl power feminism has left space for girls' collective public visibility, rather than allowing girls to be rendered blind or invisible in the glare. Still, whether or not sparkle distinguishes girls from each other, it continues to distinguish girls as feminine—

especially via the postfeminist masquerade and in conjunction with girls' performativity and public performances.

Sparkle and shine have been important elements in Disney media and marketing for many years, although they have become more prevalent with the formation of the Disney Princess Court in 2000 and since then via *Hannah Montana*. On merchandise, in performances, and in photographs, Hannah Montana is nearly always adorned in sequined or studded attire, sparkling jewelry, and designer sunglasses suggestive of bright stage lights, the bright California sun, or the need to disguise oneself against prying eyes, paparazzi, and fans. The sunglasses, in particular, are suggestive of the slippage between luminosity (exuding light) and visibility (being seen), both of which rely, in the case of the subjectifying postfeminist masquerade, on girls' ability to also *see* light. McRobbie argues, "luminosity captures how young women might be understood as currently becoming visible" (*The Aftermath* 60). The same can be said for the figure of the tween girl in the early 2000s—she was "becoming visible," and Miley Cyrus is one of the most ubiquitous and popular examples of that. The proliferation of sparkling images of Hannah Montana is rivaled by Miley Cyrus's own presence in the spotlight, and both are augmented by the production and sale of merchandise that encourages girls to adorn themselves and each other in glitter, to craft with glitter, and to play with glitter-clad *Hannah Montana* toys.[9] In *Hannah Montana*, sparkle is meant to be one of the primary

[9] For example, the *Hannah Montana* Pop Star Glitter Studio boasts "Over 100 Pieces," including art glazes, stickers, markers, jewels, and glitter pens, while multiple cosmetics sets for tween girls offer lip-glosses and other cosmetics imbued with glitter, including a "Beauty Journal Box Set" advertised by a pink, sequined Hannah Montana.

signifiers of extraordinariness, individuation, and aspirational desire, differentiating and privileging the pop star over the ordinary girl.

In accordance with the increasing presence of glitter in tween girls' fashion more broadly, Disney's proprietary fashion lines also use glitter, sequins, crystals, shiny lamé, and metallic fabrics that attract the eye and that mimic characters' costumes, while also suggesting an affiliation with the stars' personal style(s) and with celebrity and performance more generally. Nic Sammond finds that, historically, "Disney's ancillary products . . . associated its [early animated] characters [such as Pinocchio and Mickey Mouse], not with the glamour and excess of Hollywood, but with day-to-day mundane practices" (Sammond 2005: 35). But I would argue that since at least 2000, Disney has strived to make its texts and products and experiences simultaneously glamorous and mundane—especially in relation to girl performers and girl consumer audiences. As I discuss in Chapter three, Disney's consumer products division has recently developed multiple fashion lines for tween girls under the *D-Signed* label, which are associated with Disney Channel girl-driven franchises. Although *Hannah Montana* pre-dates the *D-Signed* fashion collection, Disney Consumer Products developed myriad merchandising outlets for the *Hannah Montana* franchise, including licensed fashion and costume lines, which have functioned similarly to Disney's new fashion collection, to bring sparkle and the fantasy of Disney Channel fame into the everyday lives of girls. Yet, these iterations of Disney's aesthetics of sparkle are just a few among a slew of other Disney texts and products that depict girls adorned in or surrounded by twinkling crystals, glitter, starbursts, camera flashes, or "Disneydust."

As Kearney notes, the reliance on sparkle in Disney media (often in the form of "pixiedust," "fairydust," "stardust," or "Disneydust") dates back to the 1940s, when it appeared in the animated feature films, *Pinocchio* (1940) and *Fantasia* (1940), and then, iconically, a decade later in *Cinderella* (1950) and *Peter Pan* (1953) ("Sparkle").[10] According to Richard Schickel, one of the few developments to be found in Disney animated films of the mid-twentieth century is

> the increasingly heavy use of what has come to be known in the trade as "Disneydust," those sparkly highlights that burst from any object touched by any magic wand. . . . the dust seems to have settled on almost every flat surface in sight, and it is, of course, a very close cousin to the stardust that flakes off any Disney rendering of a heavenly phenomenon. (206-207)

Here, Disneydust is related to stardust, and both are represented as products of the Disney mythos of "magic," with which the company imbues its films, television programs, theme parks, and other texts and experiences. According to Sammond, during the early post-World War II period, around the time when Disney entered television production, a public-relations "sleight of hand" made Disney appear to:

> celebrate the productive processes behind its commodities rather than masking them. By placing an emphasis on the creative process behind its shorts and features while downplaying the repetitive labor of animation (as well as its extensive operations involving licensed products and the mundane administrative and support services that are part of any industrial operation), the company reinforced an idea of Disney as a sort of magical entertainment factory. (319)

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[10] Kearney has also found that glitter made one of its earliest iconic appearances in a girls' media text prior to Disney's use of it, in 1939, with the release of MGM's *The Wizard of Oz*, which featured Dorothy's ruby slippers ("Sparkle"). Although neither Kearney nor I necessarily aim to trace the definitive origins of glitter or sparkle in girls' media, it should also be noted that there is an even earlier moment in Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937), when spectators are treated to a view of the dwarves at work in their glittering diamond mine.

Media produced in that "magical entertainment factory" increasingly have associated sparkle and shine not only with magic, but also with femininity. Luminosity has been significant to Disney's representations of fairies and princesses since the introduction of the Blue Fairy in *Pinocchio*, the quintessential princess (complete with Fairy Godmother) in *Cinderella*, and the best-known fairy in the Disney oeuvre, *Peter Pan*'s Tinker Bell. Although Disneydust has been associated with Disney products and texts beyond just princess- and fairy-focused media, these early iterations work as entry points for understanding how femininity and luminosity have intersected, however fleetingly in Disney's past.

Since the 1950s, Disney has produced a host of fairies to join Tinker Bell,[11] as well as several other animated princesses, including Aurora (*Sleeping Beauty* 1959), Ariel (*The Little Mermaid* 1989), Belle (*Beauty and the Beast* 1991), Jasmine (*Aladdin* 1992), Pocahontas (*Pocahontas* 1995), Mulan (*Mulan* 1998), Tiana (*The Princess and the Frog* 2009), Rapunzel (*Tangled* 2010), and the recent additions of Disney/Pixar's Merida (*Brave* 2012), and Disney Channel's Sofia (*Sofia the First: Once Upon a Princess* 2012). The now decades-old Disney princess aesthetic has historically represented ideal femininity through the luminous aesthetics of White bodies enhanced by sparkle to illuminate them as ideally, if magically, youthful and feminine according to early postwar ideals. Richard Dyer has explored Whiteness in Western art, photography, and cinematography, all of which have historically privileged White bodies and are also

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11 Tinker Bell and the other fairies appear in the Disney Channel movie *Pixie Hollow Games* (2011) and direct-to-video releases, *Tinker Bell* (2008), *Tinker Bell and the Lost Treasure* (2009), *Tinker Bell and the Great Fairy Rescue* (2010), and *Secret of the Wings* (2012), among other texts.

structured by gender and class (*White*). He finds that in Hollywood films, "[i]dealised white women are bathed in and permeated by light. It streams through them and falls on to them from above. In short, they glow" (*White* 122). Dyer then distinguishes between "glow" and "shine"—shine being, "the mirror effect of sweat, connoting physicality, the emissions of the body and unladylike behavior" (*White* 122). While White women continue to "glow" in popular twenty-first-century media, "shine" has gained positive value—in the discourse of postfeminism, sweat can signify a woman's "choice" to work at "having it all," and idealized femininity relies heavily on shine and sparkle to connote wealth and glamour, or extraordinariness. Cinderella has become an iconic signifier of the Disney princess's extraordinariness via her connection to both magic and sparkle—discourses to which other early Disney princesses, namely Snow White and Aurora, do not have the same level of access. Each of these animated heroines was, however, "individuated in fair-skinned, fair-eyed, anglo-saxon features of Eurocentric loveliness, both conforming to and perfecting Hollywood's beauty boundaries" (Bell "Somatexts" 110). Each of these Disney princesses was imagined and illustrated, then, in the glowing style of classical Hollywood's White leading ladies.

Although some critics have noted the passivity and lack of voice in these female adolescent characters, Elizabeth Bell describes the ways in which the bodies of Snow White, Cinderella, and Aurora, in particular, are inscribed with "backbone" as a result of having been modeled on classically trained ballet dancers ("Somatexts" 110). For Bell, "while the characterizations of Disney heroines adhere to the fairy-tale templates of passivity and victimage, their bodies are portraits of strength, discipline, and control,

performing the dancing roles of Princesses" ("Somatexts" 112). Bell's focus is not luminosity, but she calls to attention relevant discourses of class and race and ethnicity evident in these representations of girlhood when she refers to the Whiteness of Disney heroines, Hollywood's beauty standards, and the role of professional dancers as live models for these poised and "perfect," if "functionally silent," girls (Bell "Somatexts" 112). While the dancer/models themselves were not exactly thrust into public visibility through their work in Disney films, their animated likenesses allowed for the illumination of ideals of popular female beauty conventions. This discussion of young female luminosity in Disney productions, then, begins with an understanding of which bodies and subjectivities are made visible through an aesthetics of sparkle and shine.

Disney's release of *Cinderella* in 1950 coincided with a growing concern with class and feminine propriety in Western postwar cultures. Carol Dyhouse writes:

> The Cinderella story had potent appeal . . .. This fairytale fashion represented a late flowering of traditional femininity, enshrined in narratives in which quiet and submissive patterns of behavior—sitting and spinning—attracted the attention of princes. Unlike glamour girls who got up and went for what they wanted, fairy Princesses stayed submissive in the face of adversity; or, at the very least they were clever enough to act like ladies and not to look pushy. (114-115)

For Dyhouse, Disney's Cinderella, in conjunction with Cinderella-like characters in *Roman Holiday* (Paramount Pictures 1953) and *The Glass Slipper* (MGM 1955), represented upper-class femininity, in part as a result of the popularization of their "gamine look, the pearl chokers and ballet slippers," at a time when increased affluence made glamour affordable and accessible to many and "fueled fears about cheapness and vulgarity" (Dyhouse 114, 109).

The Blue Fairy of *Pinocchio* is similarly blonde, slender, adorned in sparkles, and in possession of the magic of fairydust, though she may transcend class as a product of the heavens. She is depicted descending from the night sky, Gepetto's "wishing star" fallen to Earth. As a heavenly body reimagined by Disney at the tail-end of the Great Depression and just before the World War II effort would consume the U.S., the Blue Fairy can epitomize ideals of White femininity without the excess of jewelry required to signify upper-classness and without the flash indicative of Hollywood or glamour. According to Leonard Maltin, Walt Disney himself had pronounced: "Although she must give the appearance of loveliness, she must not be [merely] a glamour girl" (Maltin 37). As Douglas Brode argues, this statement implied that Disney nobly envisioned the Blue Fairy as both "lovely enough to be a bewitcher, yet forever proving herself a nurturer" (119). For me, it is indicative also of Disney's concern with creating a character that is pleasing to look at, from a White, patriarchal, heteronormative stance that privileges feminine beauty conventions of the time and therefore also Whiteness. Further, Disney wanted the Blue Fairy's "loveliness" to be beyond reproach, for her to exude transcendent beauty through both exceptional glamour and stereotypical nurturing femininity. A glamorous appearance in all its sparkling glory is, therefore, central to this celestial, star-like character. And the addition of a caring personality functions not to contradict the notion that "bold beauty and inner *badness*" go together, as Brode claims, but to exemplify a desire to temper with traditional femininity this representation of glamorous Whiteness and its threats of Hollywood-style excess and female sexuality.[12]

[12] Brode quotes writer Dorothy Sayers who likens Disney's Blue Fairy to "Marilyn Monroe, blonde hair

With the exponential growth in the number of girl-targeted Disney texts and paratexts since 2000, the occurrence of sparkle has increased rapidly. And much more significant to contemporary girl culture than *Pinocchio*'s Blue Fairy is *Peter Pan*'s Tinker Bell. Susan Wloszczyna reported in 2009, "Walt Disney spent more money coming up with a design for Tinker Bell's look than on any other character to date, according to the studio . . ." (3D). Although her spritely luminescence likely also was derived from designs for the fairies of Disney's *Fantasia* (1940), one early version of Tinker Bell was apparently "a variation on the Blue Fairy character" (Wloszczyna 3D). With her unending supply of pixiedust, Tinker Bell has become one of the most luminous girls in the Disney animated oeuvre since being featured in the 2005 release of an illustrated children's novel that spawned Disney Fairies merchandizing and films, catering to 6-10 year olds. Although she was introduced as Peter Pan's sidekick, Tinker Bell has become a lead character and central franchise figure for Disney. And she is not alone. In the service of franchise expansion, she is one in the somewhat ethnically diverse and growing community of fairies who inhabit Disney's fictional Pixie Hollow in animated games, products, and direct-to-DVD movies.

Since those most memorable early appearances of Disneydust discussed above, both the fairy franchise and the princess aesthetic appear to rely somewhat less on White bodies, but Whiteness invades and dominates in these franchises as well. For example, Tinker Bell's friends include Iridessa, who is coded as African-American and voiced by African-American-identified actor Raven-Symoné; Vidia whose name suggests the Hindu

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and all" (Brode 139).

"Vidya" or knowledge, although she is voiced by White actor Pamela Adlon; SilverMist, a non-specific Asian character voiced by Taiwanese-American actor Lucy Liu; and Fawn, a Latina fairy, voiced by Latina actor America Ferrera. While Tinker Bell is foregrounded less often in more recent Pixie Hollow media, she remains the (White, blonde, diminutive, pixiedust-trailing) icon around which Pixie Hollow was formed. Similarly, Disney princess films have featured more non-White characters since the 1990s, and their once less luminous princesses have since been subsumed within the sparkle and shine of the Disney Princess Court.

The popular Disney princess films of the early "Eisner era" (Michael Eisner served as CEO from 1984 to 2005), as Amy M. Davis refers to it, rely somewhat less on the luminous aesthetics of White bodies than previous films, and less on sparkle and shine than subsequent films. Jasmine (*Aladdin* 1992), Pocahontas (*Pocahontas* 1995), Mulan (*Mulan* 1998), and Tiana (*The Princess and the Frog* 2009) add cultural diversity to the otherwise White, de-ethnicized Disney Princess Court. In her comprehensive analysis of Disney's "Love Affair with the Princess," Caroline Leader finds that

> the later Princesses—Mulan, the Chinese female warrior of *Mulan* and the American legend Pocahontas of *Pocahontas*—are reactions to their largely white Princess predecessors. (85)

Yet, these non-White characters are constrained by stereotypes of gender, race, and ethnicity and "whitened" as they are imagined and adapted by Disney to be the idealized—feminized and sexualized—heroines that may appeal to a mass audience. As Gary Edgerton and Kathy Merlock Jackson argue regarding Disney's reimagining of

Pocahontas (modeled after Native American consultant Shirley Little Dove Custalow McGowan, Filipino model Dyna Taylor, and white supermodel Christy Turlington),

> [Disney animators] started with Native American faces, but eventually gravitated toward the more familiar Anglicized looks of the statuesque Turlington . . . Indian features, such as Pocahontas's eyes, skin color, and wardrobe, only provide a kind of Native American styling to an old stereotype. (Edgerton and Jackson 95)

Ethnic and racial differences are frequently reduced to a matter of style in Disney media. Annalee Ward's assessment of Disney's *Mulan* reveals—and celebrates, in a problematically Orientalist way—Disney's prioritizing of "the [American] values that can be universally accepted" (112). For Ward,

> The 'chop-suey' of values embodied in *Mulan* offers a delightful but mixed taste of cultures. Bound together in a Disney sauce composed of some of the standard recipe ingredients . . . but flavored with new spices like another culture's setting . . . this film is a fresh dish on the Disney menu. (112)

Here, Ward pursues a cooking metaphor to the point of reifying Disney's efforts to "eat the Other," as bell hooks might say: "Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture" (*Black Looks* 21). Disney has produced a few princesses, then, who are meant to represent cultural diversity, but Disney's multiculturalism remains structured by White, Western, colonialist ideals, values, and beauty conventions. Further, these 1990s' films that feature non-White princesses rely considerably less on sparkle and shine than subsequent princess films—perhaps because of their use of natural settings, in the cases of Mulan and Pocahontas. (Mulan is frequently framed by pink cherry blossoms; Pocahontas is represented as "one with nature." In contrast, Jasmine is often pictured against a twinkling, star-filled night sky and always adorned in shiny jewelry.) Yet, various

iterations of every Disney princess are bejeweled and surrounded by sparkle and shine since the development of the Disney Princess Court franchise in 2000.

The Disney Company hired Andy Mooney as the new head of Disney Consumer Products in 2000 to combat decreasing sales, and he established The Princess Court as the official franchise of Disney princesses past, present, and future. The Disney Princess Court provides a kind of umbrella brand under which Disney can publicize each of its princesses separately as well as together, linking their redesigned likenesses with similar aesthetics and creating new graphics and logos to incorporate first the classic princesses (Snow White, Aurora, Cinderella), then the "modern" (read: "strong-willed, adventurous, feisty, cunning, and determined") princesses (Ariel, Belle, Pocahontas, Mulan, Jasmine, Tiana, Rapunzel, Merida, Sofia) created during and since what has been called the "Disney renaissance"—roughly the 1980s-2000 when Walt Disney Animation Studios returned to producing successful films under the direction of CEO Michael Eisner and Disney Studios Chairman Jeffrey Katzenburg. The Princess Court franchise allows for expansive merchandizing and monetization not only of the princess films and characters, but of a pervasive and normative Disney princess ethos and lifestyle for girls and women of all ages. Disney princesses and related princess rhetoric can be found on products marketed for girls from infancy through adulthood, including in promotions for Disney Princess wedding gowns, Disney World honeymoon packages, and Disney-inspired

homes and home décor.[13] For David Forgacs and others, the "cuteness" of Disney's animated characters has been motivated by ease of merchandizing for young consumer audiences. And regarding Disney princess culture for adults, Elana Levine has analyzed the *Weddings of a Lifetime* reality television series as a synergistic effort by Disney to maintain its family image while also promoting Disney theme parks as wedding venues and honeymoon destinations to Lifetime viewers and the soap opera audience. That Disney princess ethos and lifestyle marketed to women and girls, then, privileges White, middle-class, heteronormative values.

Many of the pre-2000 Disney princess films do not exhibit nearly as much sparkle as more recent films, but the Disney Princess Court franchise has generated myriad examples of overwhelmingly luminous princesses. A close look at a few of the glossy posters sold to promote Princess fandom, for instance, reveals the increased use of sparkle and shine to enhance these royal heroines' visibility. One series of Disney princess posters features several princesses in an array of pastel colors, each covered in bright white sparkles suggestive of twinkling stars, lights, glitter, crystals, or sequins. In their individual posters, each princess is surrounded by light, decorated with jewels, and embraced by a trail of glittering pixiedust that conveniently mimics a curving pathway to the iconic Disney castle that doubles as a sparkling crown. These posters and their princesses are sold as "Cinderella Sparkle," "Sleeping Beauty Shines," "Bejeweled

[13] Disney has also brought Princess and Fairy culture into sports culture through its ESPN networks and the "run Disney Club," sponsoring events such as the Disney Princess Half Marathon and the Tinker Bell Half Marathon.

Belle," and "Snow White Shimmer."[14] Their simple titles simultaneously connote action and visibility, making these princesses appear both performative and luminous as they "shine," "sparkle," "shimmer," and (perhaps more passively) are "bejeweled."

In another widely available poster series featuring Jasmine, Snow White, Cinderella, Belle, Ariel, and Aurora, Disney's animated princesses swim in a sea of gold—tiaras, jewels, and luxurious, flowing gowns (harem pants, scarf, and diaphanous sleeves, instead, for Jasmine). Against a purple background, covered with lavender arabesque designs, gold vines and flowers surround a graphic of a shared golden crown that floats above the characters' heads. Below their feet, in gold script, is the phrase: "Shine like a star, wherever you are." Here, the copy offers a very specific directive to augment the aesthetic of sparkle, glitz, and glamor. This poster does not just present a vision of golden princesses to be looked at and desired, but it also calls upon the viewer to shine, to be a star. And it demands that the viewer or consumer shine "wherever you are," regardless of physical location, and perhaps also regardless of social position, status, or circumstance. While the call to "shine like a star" may be subject to myriad meanings and interpretations, its accompanying highly stylized representation of Disney heroines drives home the importance of decadent accouterments, visibility, and hegemonic gender presentation, privileging Whiteness, wealth, and "to-be-looked-at-ness" as integral to successful femininity (Mulvey). The phenomenon of the Disney Princess popularized in the mid- to late-twentieth century has become, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, one of the corporation's most successful avenues for lifestyle branding across

[14] See Allposters.com, last accessed on 14 May 2013.

age demographics and media platforms.[15] Sparkle and shine, and incitements to do so, together bolster the aspirational fantasy created in Disney princess culture, and they become technologies of neoliberal individuation and postfeminist luminosity marketed to girls and women beyond that franchise.

In addition to the luminous aesthetics discussed above, which figure frequently in contemporary media targeting girls, references to stars, dreams or wishes, and magic have long been part of Disney's rhetoric used to appeal to broader audiences in a somewhat universal and unifying way, regardless of differences of gender, race, class, location, or age. Although they did not originate in girls' culture, rhetoric and luminous imagery related to magic, stars, stardom, and dreams have been increasingly prevalent in girls' media from the 1990s forward. To better establish how these aspects of the discourse of luminosity came to be so central to girls' media produced by Disney, it is important to acknowledge Disney's historical reliance on these discourses to unify a larger audience. Perhaps the most prevalent example of Disney's deployment of stars, dreams, and magic can be found in the well-known, award-winning song from Disney's *Pinocchio*, "When You Wish Upon a Star" (Harline and Washington 1940). Decades since its initial release, this song remains a signature tune for Disney and is played in conjunction with the Disney logo—Cinderella's castle illuminated by Disneydust—before and after feature films and on DVD releases, as well as in theme park promotions

[15] Sales at Disney Consumer Products doubled in 2007, driven, in part, by the *Hannah Montana* franchise. Revenues rose from $13 billion in 2002 to $26 billion in 2007. Today there are over 25,000 products based on the franchise ("Disney Consumer Products Continues").

and at Disney events. The song's tune and lyrics have come to epitomize the sense of enchantment, magic, and fantasy associated with Disney.

> When you wish upon a star/ Makes no difference who you are/ Anything your heart desires/ Will come to you/ If your heart is in your dream/ No request is too extreme/ When you wish upon a star/ As dreamers do. (Harline and Washington)

Further along in the song, as long as "you" desire something deeply enough, "fate" (personified as "she," the Blue Fairy) will make your dreams and wishes come true. In this scenario, anyone with access to the night sky can wish upon a star and potentially have anything she wants. The song illuminates the way in which stars and stardom, to flex the metaphor a bit, are used in Disney rhetoric to connect individuals and to render possible "anyone's" dreams.

Although systemic inequalities far outdate the Reagan-era neoliberal economic turn, it is within this neoliberal context that the assumption of equal access and opportunity is increasingly manifested in the depoliticization of everyday life. Each individual is responsible for determining her own lot in life, and this individualizing strategy renders invisible the structural inequalities of racism, age-ism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and free-market capitalism that may dictate or constrain such life choices. Disney's texts, products, and promotions can function to allay anxieties over vast systemic inequalities by reproducing normative hegemonic ideologies within a broader rhetoric of universalism, such as stardom, while simultaneously relying on the rhetoric of individualism and choice essential to neoliberalism. Susan Hopkins argues that girls in the twenty-first century increasingly dream of being famous, as opposed to seeing marriage as their primary goal. "Love and marriage is no longer the final answer

to youthful feminine desire. Beauty here involves making yourself worthy of the sparkling world of celebrity" (Hopkins 191). For contemporary girls, then, feminine beauty is a prerequisite for visibility, just as it is reproduced by celebrity culture. Disney Channel's *Hannah Montana* brings this individualized, aspirational fantasy into the everyday lives of contemporary girls via television and popular music that also employ the postfeminist individuating strategy of combining sparkling embellishment with performative rhetoric, all of which the Disney Princess Court, Disney Fairies, and Disney Channel's girl-centered franchises have perpetuated since *Hannah Montana* ceased production.

PERFORMANCE AND PERFORMATIVITY

While the Disney Princess franchise has long relied upon luminous aesthetics (i.e., sparkle and shine and the "glow" of White feminine bodies), its diversification into lifestyle products, in recent decades, has demonstrated Disney's increasing exploitation of performative femininity through incitements for women and girls to perform and make themselves visible in certain ways—by appearing on *Weddings of a Lifetime* in dramatic Disney Princess wedding gowns or "staging" their weddings at Disneyland, for instance, or by dressing up as or posing with their favorite Disney Princesses. In contrast, the Disney Channel franchises foregrounded in this dissertation, have aimed at diversified lifestyle marketing and merchandizing specifically to tween girls from their inception in the early 2000s. These live-action franchises add significant performative and performance-oriented elements to Disney's entrenched usage of luminous aesthetics and have been integral to the successes of Disney Channel, Disney Music Group (Hollywood

Records and Walt Disney Records), Radio Disney, and Disney Consumer Products. As representatives of this phenomenon, Hannah Montana and Miley Cyrus came to embody not only the luminosity of the postfeminist masquerade in Disney Channel series and in celebrity culture, but also the idealized, hypervisible, performative "can-do" girlhood that has been constructed as the norm for girls in developed nations in the early years of the twenty-first century.

My exploration of performativity in this chapter follows from Judith Butler's conceptualization of gender performativity. For Butler,

> words, acts, and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality. (*Gender Trouble* 173)

We perform and communicate gender in a variety of ways—through appearance, speech, and behavior—in order to make ourselves "legible" to each other. Similarly, Lucy Green theorizes identity performance as

> informal display . . . a type of display that takes place all around us: in the streets, in the home, in places of leisure and places of work, through the variously suggestive adoption of particular postures, manners, glances, vocal inflections, clothing or other embellishments and accouterments. (22)

Gender performativity is bound up, not only in forms of display and behavior, however, but also in the performance of emotional labor in relation to others. According to Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, "[d]oing gender furnishes the interactional scaffolding of social structure, along with a built-in mechanism of social control" (33). Inasmuch as gender performativity is based on interpretation—constructed socially—it can thus constitute a form of emotional and affective labor (West and Zimmerman). Arlie

R. Hochschild argues that women risk being "considered less 'feminine'" when they "put their own feelings less at the service of others" (165). For Hochschild, all people perform emotional labor, but women do more emotional labor than men as a result of their dependent status as women under patriarchy. Likewise, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt define affective labor as traditionally feminine. They argue that affective and cognitive forms of labor are valued for their production of "immaterial goods"—products of "the head and heart, such as "images, information, knowledge, affects, codes, and social relationships" (132). In particular, they find that "affective, emotional, or relationship tasks" traditionally have been feminized by their construction as "women's work" (Hardt and Negri 133).

As I argue in the sections that follow, representations of girlhood in Disney Channel's live-action franchises are reliant on identity performance—particularly gender performativity, which is made most explicit in performance-oriented texts, such as the pop concert, music video, dance or acting performance, and certainly throughout the *Hannah Montana* franchise. Focusing on the significance of gendered performance in relation to music performance, Green finds that the "selfrecurring cycle of reference from the female back to the feminine is one of the intrinsic and enduring symbolic elements of female musical performance" (Green 26). For Green, professional female vocalists are particularly well-positioned by their embodiments of "institutionalized display"—that which relies on a separation from the audience, usually manifested by the use of a stage—to affirm performances of femininity (Green 22). This affirmation of femininity is symptomatic of the "feminizing powers of musical display," but also reifies the power of

female performers to command an audience. In this way, performativity, everyday identity performances, and "institutionalized performance" are inextricably intertwined. As such, while here I attempt to distinguish between performativity and performance, I frequently refer to both girls' performativity and girls' performances as singers, dancers, and actors within the same contexts throughout this chapter.

Acting, as well as music and dance performance, is defined in part by its demands on the performer to emote and behave in particular ways. When thinking of girls as entertainers, I pull from performance theorist Richard Schechner who summarizes Michael Kirby's work to explain, "The [actor] generates a character with feelings. Some emotional work is required . . . acting becomes increasingly complex the more elements [including emotions] are used in constructing the characterization" (Schechner 174-175). Accordingly, it could be argued that any girl with the capacity to convey emotions may have a talent for entertaining—especially via those popular categories of performance: acting, dancing, and singing, which rely significantly on the body and voice and which are integral to expanding girl-driven transmedia franchises. As Green argues,

> [t]he sight and sound of the woman singing . . . affirms the correctness of the fact of what is absent: the unsuitability of any serious and lasting connection between woman and instrument, woman and technology. (Green 29)

As naturalized as the image of the singing woman may be, the successes of Disney's Hannah Montana character, as well as those of pop star Miley Cyrus, generate powerful imagery of girls performing to entertain others, frequently without the visible use of

technology or instruments other than body, manner, and voice.[16]

In addition to their participation as emotional and affective laborers via gender performativity and entertainment performance, the girl performers discussed in this dissertation have been characterized as "to-be-looked-at" by virtue of being female (Mulvey). These celebrity girls and the girl consumers and audiences who identify with their performances are increasingly expected to aspire to visibility through access to beauty conventions and appeals to (hetero)sexual desire. Hopkins argues that contemporary girls

> [imagine] themselves as famous popstars and supermodels. Their dream is not necessarily about sex or romance—it's more likely about playing the fame game. Beauty and sex appeal are valued in girl culture texts as means to 'super' power and status. (94)

Hopkins is quick to remind us that girls' visibility is not only generated for the looking pleasure of men, but in fact capitalizes on the girl's own gaze. For Hopkins, "[I]n a media age in which fame can bring unimaginable rewards, the capacity to draw the desiring female gaze is a commodity in its own right" (187). Similarly, Green argues for an understanding of female musical performers as powerful when she claims, "The woman singer, in her self-possessedness and her ability to lure, is invested with a power that is unavailable to onlookers" (Green 28). Girl performers' visibility is powerful both culturally and economically, then, as a result of their affective labor—their efforts to appeal to, relate to, inspire, and interact with girl audiences in particularly feminine and

[16] It is worth noting here, however, that technologies abound in music performance, regardless of whether or not the performer plays an instrument. For example, performers increasingly rely on the use of auto-tune and other sound-manipulation technologies in recorded and live performances. In addition, Cyrus and her characters each have been pictured from time to time playing acoustic and electric guitar and working in recording studios, where microphones, headphones, and mixing equipment abound.

feminized ways.

DISNEY CELEBRITY AND THE GIRL COMMODITY

In the inaugural issue of *Celebrity Studies Journal*, Graeme Turner calls for a focus on celebrity as a social and cultural formation and as a function of media and global, transnational conglomerate business ("Approaching" 16-17). Thinking through how contemporary notions of girls' celebrity might alter expectations and understandings of girlhood, and the aspirations of girls, provides a way of theorizing celebrity as developing around and through postfeminist discourses of girlhood. Exploring girls' celebrity within the context of the powerful Disney brand reveals tensions between, on the one hand, the innocent, wholesome, paradoxically pre-sexual and heteronormative girlhood represented on Disney Channel and, on the other hand, the facts of girls' maturing bodies and girls' sexualities made visible and commodifiable through the brand's exploitation of girls' celebrity.

As part of the project to incite girls to "shine," Disney personnel working to produce and promote girl-driven franchises also employ the classical Hollywood-era rhetoric of stardom, constructing sometimes contradictory narratives of discovery and development around individual Disney performers. President of Disney Channels Worldwide, Gary Marsh, comments, "We made a bet on Miley that she had that star quality, the charisma and the 'it' factor to create this role" (Littleton A1). Faith in notions of an "it" quality, "star" quality, or star charisma persists among media professionals as well as audiences, reifying individual performers as simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary (Dyer *Stars*). This discourse thrives in celebrity gossip publications, media

promotions, and celebrity events, as well as in media industry trade press. "'Ordinary people,' of course, have always been 'discovered,' suddenly extracted from their everyday lives and processed for stardom" (Turner "The Mass Production"). In Chapter two, I discuss the racial and ethnic connotations of Selena Gomez's rise to fame in relation to American dream mythos and her "discovery" by Disney, and I complicate the Hollywood discovery narrative using Raven-Symoné's construction as already a "seasoned professional" when she starred on Disney Channel. In this chapter, it is most useful to focus on the various narratives of Miley Cyrus's celebrity origins in order to get at how she has come to embody the performative girlhood made so iconic by her performances and visibility in and beyond the *Hannah Montana* franchise.

In trade publications, Cyrus is described as "persistent" in her bid for the Hannah Montana role, sending audition reels, calling, and flying to Los Angeles repeatedly to audition. When Marsh and *Hannah Montana* co-creator/executive producer Michael Poryes saw Cyrus's first audition tape,

> they thought she was adorable and well-spoken, but a little too young and unpolished to fit the "Hannah" bill. But Miley's persistence paid off . . . [and] with another year of acting lessons under her rhinestone belt. They had their Hannah. (Littleton A1)

In this telling, Cyrus actively pursued the role over the course of Disney's year-long "great Hannah Montana hunt" (Littleton A1). In her best-selling memoir, Cyrus and co-writer Hilary Liftin present the prolonged casting efforts for *Hannah Montana* as a time of uncertainty and anxiety for Cyrus. Reflecting on the moment she was given the part, her memoir reads:

> I had flown to Los Angeles to audition and/or meet with Disney executives at least four times. I had been too small for the part. I had been too young for the part . . . They had tried really hard to find anybody other than me for the part. I'd been working and hoping for Hannah and warding off a pack of (well, three) teenage bullies that whole sucky year of sixth grade. (Cyrus and Liftin 58-59)

Cyrus presents her pursuit of the role as a struggle, but throughout the book and in interviews elsewhere she refers to acts of God and fate and destiny, saying repeatedly that the role "was meant for her." In fact, she auditioned for the best friend role of Lilly initially, and the lead was apparently altered to reflect her backstory after she was cast. References that elide Cyrus' hard work and lobbying in favor of a narrative of fated Disney discovery illustrate Dyer's point that star personae "serve to disguise the fact that [stars] are just as much produced images, constructed personalities as 'characters' are" (*Stars* 20). The search for that "it" factor or star "charisma" and references to fate and discovery continue to inflect Cyrus' star image (*Stars*). Yet, Disney producers simultaneously make claims to developing young talent, and Cyrus herself describes her casting in *Hannah Montana* as a long process that required hard work.

Variety's Youth Impact Report for 2008 states: "It's been a real-life Cinderella story for the performer, who lobbied Disney casting directors for the *Hannah Montana* role" (Huntington A5). The author suggests that Cyrus got the role as a result of her active lobbying, but the Cinderella reference implies that Cyrus, an ordinary girl, was launched into extraordinary wealth and celebrity as a result of her discovery by Disney, Cyrus having done little more than show up and "shine." In this brief statement lies evidence of the contradictory discourse surrounding Cyrus's stardom, meant simultaneously to "Disneyfy" Cyrus by mythologizing her rise to fame, while also

creating a sense that Disney "discovers" and "develops" potential stars, as well as facilitates stardom for girls who come to Disney seeking it. Disney's pursuit of girl stars becomes reimagined as girls' pursuit of fame—the processes are constructed as interchangeable. As such, Hannah Montana and Miley Cyrus, together become a sort of live-action, normalizing extension of princess culture, in which girls—not animated princesses—seek out visibility in pursuit of their "dreams."

Girls' dreams, wishes, or fantasies of becoming famous entertainers are in part fueled by constructions of girl performers as possessed of natural talents just waiting to be discovered and made visible. Following Elizabeth Wissinger's theorization of "the shift to an affect economy in late capitalism," Monica Swindle argues that girls increasingly are responsible for or symbolic of "social production subsumed by capital" (Swindle [24]; Wissinger 234). In the contemporary affect economy, all aspects of social life become "forces of production" and therefore are increasingly drawn into the domain of capital investment (Wissinger 234). Swindle writes:

> girls do much affective labor that becomes coded as immaterial and thus becomes invisible, though at the same time paradoxically visible, the object of cultural surveillance that moves these activities in the public sphere. (Swindle [24])

Swindle refers not only to the labor of actual girls to generate and sustain relationships with others and to enact girlhood in/as their everyday lives, but also to the labor of the feeling of girl—the ways in which the symbolic girl is interpreted or felt by others, the sense of what might be called "girl-ness." Objects and aesthetic aspects of girls' culture are imbued with the affect of girl. Although Swindle characterizes girl culture somewhat narrowly by defining it via "happy objects" like "stickers, Hello Kitty, and glitter"

(Ahmed; Swindle [31]), she insightfully points out the affective labor of girl-ness and the (often invisible) significance of girls' visibility. For her, the affect economy created in late capitalism re/produces and relies upon girls' visibility, yet girls' labor in this economy is not often acknowledged as labor.[17] Girls maintain relationships within their families and with their schoolmates, and they actively uphold as well as resist conventions of youth and femininity, race and class. Symbolically, girl functions to encompass and/or alleviate national cultural and economic anxieties. Given their symbolic power, girls also may be particularly well-suited for the affective labor of stardom and entertainment celebrity in contemporary culture. Performance, as affective or relational labor, becomes integral to constructions of contemporary girlhood as more and more girls are expected to desire both visibility and also opportunities to perform under surveillance with the goal of celebrity (Hopkins).

Entertainment industries, including those dominated by the Walt Disney Company, provide forums for girls' visibility and, therefore, precipitate cultural and economic reliance also on girls' performances. According to Alan Bryman, one of the influences of the Walt Disney Company on society has been the spread of the performance metaphor throughout various industries. The Company employs the language of performance, not only in casting actors and singers for recording, film, or television contracts, but also at theme parks, on cruise lines, and in corporate training. For example, Disney employees are referred to as "cast members" or "hosts/hostesses," job

[17] In Chapter three, I discuss this further in relation to Disney Channel's and Disney Consumer Products' efforts at relationship and lifestyle branding for tween girls.

interviews are "auditions" (Bryman *The Disneyization* 11). Using the rhetoric of performance in day-to-day operations, Disney creates a universe in which everyone is a performer. Disney's construal of individuals as performers is not restricted to girls, or even to youth, but Disney's performative rhetoric is embodied more often than not by young female performers. If girls' affective labor is generally understood as immaterial and invisible, entertainment is a field in which such labor becomes visible in some productive, if complex, ways.[18]

Individualizing discourses in contemporary postfeminist girls' culture are driven by incitements to perform, to entertain others, which are rampant in Disney's efforts to sustain and grow its consumer-base. As I will discuss further in Chapters three and four, Disney increasingly illuminates girls as stars and producers, as well as fans (and future stars) of pop music, popular television, and commercial film. And girls' efforts within the media and fashion-beauty complexes as also consumers, trend leaders, models, brand names, and fashion designers feeds a larger celebrity presence—the presence of the girl as "tween idol." The Walt Disney Company plays a significant part in the construction of the tween girl idol by commodifying a certain performance of girlhood for girls' consumption, not limited to specific media platforms, experiences, or product lines. Although Disney Channel executives claim to have suddenly realized, in the early 2000s, that they needed to treat talent as properties to be owned and managed, the Walt Disney Company (like most Hollywood studios) has a history of contracting performers to sell

[18] See Baker ("Rock on"; "Pop (In)to"), Malik, and Allen for ways in which girl performers and girls' fandom can be generative aspects of identity production.

products (IRTS Seminar notes). Reproducing girlhood as a subjectivity from which one must entertain others and be a feminine role model is not a new phenomenon for the Disney Company, but early girl entertainers were fewer and farther between, understood as novelties.[19] Since *Hannah Montana*'s successful debut, Disney has generated more tween girl idols than it ever had before, and girl performers like Miley Cyrus have provided Disney with multi-billion-dollar franchise potential.

Hannah Montana is the quintessential tween girl idol. The very public nature of her life as a pop star distinguishes her from the protagonists in the many other girl-focused texts that rely on secret identities when representing girlhood. Hannah Montana's pop star fame translates easily to Miley Cyrus, whose fame extends beyond the series and her performances as Hannah, spanning across film, television, gaming, music, fashion, and literature. Further, as an adolescent girl uprooted to Los Angeles from a home in Tennessee so she can pursue a career in entertainment, Miley Stewart's narrativized rise to fame mirrors that of Miley Cyrus, the actor who plays her. Some girl-focused television programs have relied on voice-overs and diary entries to convey a girl's "secret" inner life, while shows like *The Secret World of Alex Mack* (Nickelodeon 1994-1998), *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (ABC, WB 2000-2003), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (WB 1997-2003), and *Wizards of Waverly Place* (Disney 2007-2012) instead allow girls to play out many, often conventionally more masculine, behaviors and identities about which they might otherwise only fantasize. These girl protagonists usually have

[19] Perhaps Disney's most well-known early girl performers, Hayley Mills and Annette Funicello continued to garner public admiration and respect as actors and harbingers of Disney values throughout their lives (See Brode; Nilsen).

supernatural powers to control and keep hidden, but Stewart's/Cyrus's power stems from her natural musical talent, her work as a performer, and her continued success and luminous visibility in the public sphere.

Just as the teen girls before her, the contemporary postfeminist tween girl idol is expected to be a role model for other girls, as well as a consummate entertainer. The expectation of responsible citizenship that accompanies this subjectivity simultaneously implicates the actual, publicly visible girl in her own failed femininity by presenting her as always/already a *victim* of public scrutiny and policing just as she is also expected to actively assert herself in the face of such surveillance and deconstruction. For instance, moral panics have erupted repeatedly over Miley Cyrus's sexual expression and over sexualized images of her circulating online and in popular press, because they seem to contradict the wholesome innocence of her Disney Channel characters and her early youthful, girly persona in ways that make her, in the eyes of many, an inappropriate role model for young girls. In response, Cyrus revealed to *Seventeen* magazine (in the December 2009/January 2010 issue) that she had canceled her Twitter account as a way to retain her privacy in the face of intense public scrutiny (Rosenberg "Miley: 2009").

Although such moral panics are tied directly to fears of both childhood sexuality and female sexual desire, they are, of course, not exclusive to Cyrus. Elizabeth Butler Breese explores how the visibility of Nickelodeon's *Zoey 101* (2005-2008) star, Jamie Lynn Spears, made her a site through which popular press outlets, fans, and parents could try to mediate the "crisis" of teen pregnancy in the United States. "Celebrities undoubtedly are commodities . . .. Celebrities are also symbols by which we narrate,

negotiate, and interpret our collective experience and establish moral boundaries" (Breese 352). Breese discusses the tension between Spears' earlier, more "wholesome" celebrity image and that of her sister, Britney, and other "bad girl" celebrities like Lindsay Lohan, whose misdeeds have set precedents for girl stars gone awry—"can-do" girls publically shamed for exceeding the bounds of normative youthful femininity. Spears' pregnancy was often positioned in opposition to her kid-friendly role on Nickelodeon in much the way Cyrus' suggestive dance moves, risqué costumes, and references to sex and marijuana have been contrasted to her early Disney persona. For example, photographs of Cyrus, taken by Annie Leibovitz for *Vanity Fair* in 2008, caused an uproar in popular media coverage and among parents and fans over their sexual connotations, prompting the young star to issue a public apology. Cyrus was photographed with tossled hair, clutching a satin sheet, with her back and shoulders bared. Reactions to the photos made the "Miley Cyrus *Vanity Fair*" controversy one of the "12 Most Viral Web Stories of 2008," according to the *Huffington Post* (Peretti). James Kincaid writes about the moral panic that ensued, "Miley Cyrus's big, bare, unprotected back, carefully lit for all to see, is . . . a slate on which we can scrawl our rudest and most obscene comments without fear of detection" ("Hannah Montana's" 6). Young female stars like Cyrus must navigate celebrity, then, as it intersects with sexual politics, constructions of youthful innocence, and issues of morality in U.S. culture.

Breese argues that Spears' teenage pregnancy functioned as a site of struggle for the larger culture. The more scandalous her reputation became, the more difficult these

negotiations were for her and the more divisive her fame became for fans and society at large. It is symptomatic of the larger cultural significance of female visibility that

> [w]omen's exposure to the eyes of particular men, or random publics, and concerns about what [women's] clothing covers and what it reveals have often been used to demonstrate the position of entire societies or classes or families with respect to ideals of equality and liberation. (Ossman 21)

Within the context of postfeminism, it is the public surveillance and policing of tween and teen girls' bodies and behaviors that reproduces the shifting discursive bounds of idealized femininity. Regarding young women in relation to contemporary popular culture, Catharine Lumby argues, "young women are arguably ciphers for broader tensions over the relationship between cultural and personal authenticity and conformity to a consumerist society" (Lumby 346). The young female celebrity, then, aging and maturing in public view, is always/already a site of complex cultural and political negotiations.

Though the girl as tween idol certainly may exhibit many tenets of a postfeminist masquerade, the idol emerges not simply from the fashion-beauty complex as McRobbie would have it, but from mediated consumer culture in which bodies and personae and personalities are commodified, made visible under particular constraints, and celebrated. As Dyer has argued, "[s]tars are involved in making themselves commodities; they are both labour and the thing that labour produces" (*Heavenly Bodies* 5). One of the primary constraints of the Disney Channel brand is that of narrow gender and sexual identities developed by and through its stars and characters, for tween audiences. The prescriptive heteronormativity that constrains representations on Disney Channel, although subject to

interpretation, could limit identificatory possibilities for girls, whom Disney executives and producers envision as "pre-sexual." Gary Marsh has stated that:

> We leave it up to our audience to interpret who these characters are and how they relate to them . . . We don't deal with sexuality on the Disney Channel in general. That's just sort of not where our audience's head's at. They're really a pre-sexual audience, for the most part, and so sexuality is not how we look to tell any kind of stories. (qtd. in MacKenzie)

Here, Marsh constructs sexuality as a matter of interpretation, as something left unaddressed in Disney Channel series, and as irrelevant to Disney Channel's young "pre-sexual" audience members. Yet, Disney Channel's girl-focused programs do "deal with sexuality," however indirectly, via heteronormative romance narratives. Each of the characters discussed in this dissertation becomes involved in and/or contemplates heterosexual romantic relationships in their Disney Channel series, feature films, and made-for-TV movies. The significance of heteronormative romance to Disney Channel series also reveals that the narratives provide viewers with a preferred interpretation of certain characters—if not all of them—as heterosexual. By clarifying that sexuality is *not* the focus of Disney Channel narratives, Marsh reproduces Disney values by denying the presence of sexuality in the network's franchises, ignoring the series' overwhelming heteronormativity, and denying the differences that define audience members.

Hannah Montana's successful exploitation of heteronormative characterizations meant a heightened visibility and narrow, "Disneyfied" subject position for Miley Cyrus. Tween girl fans, too, have participated in complex negotiations with images of Cyrus beyond Disney Channel, as illustrated by Tiina Vares and Sue Jackson's recent study. Perhaps validating Marsh's statement about the "pre-sexual" nature of the Disney

Channel tween audience, Vares and Jackson's participants revealed that as fans of *Hannah Montana*, they were distressed by Miley Cyrus' "inappropriate" behaviors and practices of dress when sexualized images of her circulated online and in tabloids. Cyrus's superstar status mirrored the celebrity afforded her character, Hannah Montana, during her reign on Disney Channel. Cyrus was ambitious, hard working, and dedicated to her multifaceted career. But success for entertainers is not always represented as the result of work or "good choices," as it is for the "can-do" girl described by Harris. Cyrus was no exception. Miley Stewart's constant pleas on *Hannah Montana* to be seen as "just a normal girl," in conjunction with Miley Cyrus' pleas in public press to be forgiven for her mistakes (such as after the Leibovitz photo shoot mentioned above), because "I'm not perfect,"[20] easily legitimate "notions that human attributes exist independently of material circumstances" (Dyer *Stars* 43). Stardom relies on a certain invisibility of labor, and modern celebrity is increasingly divorced from notions of authenticity, quality, talent, and hard work (Meyers "Can You"). This invisible labor or assumed lack of talent and/or hard work may complicate Cyrus's and Montana's mutual status as "can-do" girls. Further, the blurring of worlds between Miley Cyrus and her Disney Channel characters is possible only under certain circumstances and has had significant material consequences, particularly strengthening multiple brands—Disney Channel, Miley Cyrus, and the *Hannah Montana* franchise, not to mention Radio Disney and Hollywood Records.

[20] A few years later, Cyrus sang a response to the 2008 *Vanity Fair* photo shoot in a song called "I'm Sorry that I'm not Perfect," when she hosted NBC's *Saturday Night Live* (March 5th, 2011).

When questioned about the difficulties of young celebrity, Cyrus' manager Jason Morey employs a morbid analogy to express the simultaneous impossibility and necessity of his client's sexual maturation:

> [T]here's no way to stop a girl from growing up without creating something that's not real. Could we handcuff Miley and stick her in a box and tell her, "Don't grow up?" We could try, but there's nothing more uninteresting in the world. (qtd. in Luscombe 47)

Morey claims that girlhood is interesting only as a process of growth, but that process of growth is also a process of regulation, containment, sexualization, and commodification. Morey reveals, too, the violently contradictory notion that the impossible ideal is, in fact, for the girl to be caged, her "innocence" preserved for public consumption. Since this ideal is impossible to achieve, Cyrus' manager works to help her and Disney capitalize on Cyrus' so-called missteps and mistakes as part of "growing up." They become, then, part of the process of being interesting, of celebrity branding, of subjectification, and of economic exploitation. They also contribute to the image of failed White femininity that has continually threatened Cyrus' reputation as a role model for girls, recalling the "failings" that have haunted other former Disney performers, like Britney Spears and Lindsay Lohan. To whatever degree she reaches her potential or "fails," Miley Cyrus becomes a product of the Walt Disney Company and a vehicle for Disney's trademark wholesomeness, reproducing young female celebrity as simultaneously ideal and ordinary, especially in light of Disney's ubiquitous incitements to perform and the postfeminist expectations of "can-do" girlhood.

Since the success of *Hannah Montana* and its tween-aged star, Disney divisions

have been particularly attentive to tween girls' capacities for singing, dancing, and acting, creating opportunities for girls to take up subjectification in order to try and meet their potential to "shine" as multi-hyphenate entertainment celebrities. Across multiple platforms, Disney asks girls to participate in behaviors that reflect and critique the performances of their favorite Disney Channel stars or narratives by singing, dancing, making media, and engaging with fashion in a variety of ways. Disney invites girls to participate in international casting tours, to be featured on Disney Channel or Radio Disney, to interact with Disney properties, talent, and each other online, and to compete for attention in Disney-sponsored contests and promotions. For instance, Disney locates new talent by launching casting junkets in major metropolitan areas, which are attended by millions of girls. In another example, Radio Disney administers an annual music competition called "N.B.T." or "Next Big Thing" (2008-present) in which fans vote for their favorite of five preselected teen or pre-teen musical acts. The competitors, having thus been brought into the Disney fold, have opportunities to record and tour and act in Disney Channel vehicles, regardless of whether or not they are voted "winners" of N.B.T.[21] The majority of artists featured have been teen girls, and girl audiences continue to lead in participation for these contests and the media produced with and by the competitors. In a third example, Disney launched a dance competition called "Make Your Mark: *Shake It Up* Dance Off" in 2012. Kids, ages 8-16, were asked to submit home video footage of short dance sequences to be streamed online, which attracted increased

[21] The winner(s) of the 2012 competition, sisters Chloe and Halle Bailey, won a guest appearance on popular Disney Channel sitcom, *Austin & Ally* (2011-present), had a single released by Disney Music Group, and were the opening act at the finale concert in Los Angeles, CA (in which they wore matching, glitter-covered gold blazers).

traffic to the Disney Channel website and worked to promote not only the contest, but the series and performers that inspired it. A majority of the videos were made by or for young girls. Thus, Disney encourages—even expects—girls to perform, to raise their voices, to express themselves through creative production, to act, to dance, to host and present. These incitements to perform become integral to "can-do" girlhood in postfeminist culture. Yet girls' performances continue to be circumscribed by multiple competing discourses of age-appropriateness and gender, of class status and racial or ethnic identities, of stardom and celebrity, and by the institutions in which they operate—here, the Walt Disney Company and the societies in which its products circulate.

The female tween idol is a subjectivity available to only a few, but she also functions as an aspirational symbol for the many, many girls across the globe who become familiar with her via Disney Channel programming, popular cinema, Disney consumer products, Walt Disney Records, Hollywood Records, and Radio Disney, among other outlets. While the contemporary tween girl idol absolutely functions to reproduce conventions of beauty and fashion in various modes and technologies of representation, hers is not solely an aesthetic existence. She is the product of increased attention not only to girls' commodified bodies and appearances, but also to girls' luminous performances and entertainment value(s) as stars and cultural producers, as well as girls' value(s) as fans, audiences, and consumers in postfeminist culture. The tween girl idol may be a contemporary construct made most lucrative by Disney, but her fans are part of a long history of girls' emulation of female popstars and young women's identifications with and emulation of movie stars beyond Disney products and personae.

For instance, Jackie Stacey's reception studies demonstrate that young women's identification with and emulation of stars can be traced back to the classical Hollywood era (Stacey). Lisa Lewis's work analyzes girls' emulation of Madonna and Cyndi Lauper at arena concerts in the 1980s, and Sarah Baker's more recent work reveals girls' emulation of performers like Britney Spears in the privacy of their bedrooms (Lewis; Baker "Rock On"; "Pop (In)to"). While clearly Disney is not responsible for creating tween girls' fan practices, dictating how girls dress, or forcing girls to sing and dance, its exploitation of the tween girl idol demands girls' attention to, identification with, and emulation of her in ways that also exploit the history of women's and girls' relationships with stars.

In addition, the postfeminist tween idol constructed through Disney media is a contested subjectivity in which the "Second-" and "Third-wave" feminist ideals of do-it-yourself creativity, collaborative work ethic, pro-active, self-assured, and assertive self-expression bolster her as a potentially feminist identity (Harris *Future*; Banet-Weiser "Girls Rule"; Hopkins). Similar to McRobbie's conceptualization of young women's postfeminist subjectivities, however, the underlying (and overwhelming) neoliberal economic and corporate concerns that attempt to dictate girls' participation in mainstream consumer culture rely on the exploitation of individuals and the groups to which they appeal, revealing the appropriation and manipulation of feminist discourses, if not the silent assumption of equality, in the service of capitalist patriarchy.

THE FANTASY OF CELEBRITY IN *HANNAH MONTANA*

Early in the *Hannah Montana* series Miley's immediate family and her two best friends, as well as a few others later on, gain access to her secret, but the crux of many *Hannah Montana* episodes is Miley's desire to maintain boundaries between her two worlds. *Hannah Montana* employs the ruse of the secret identity as a focal point of many plots and gags, but, ultimately, Miley Stewart's two worlds must be integrated in order to sustain the narrative. Tensions between normative girl identities and celebrity or star personae, and between authenticity and performativity, are repeatedly raised and then mitigated in the series' continued attempts to reproduce and normalize celebrity girlhood via the "girl next door" trope. With minimal assistance from her ever-present father, manager, and songwriter, Robbie Ray Stewart (played by Miley Cyrus's real-life dad, musician Billy Ray Cyrus), Miley Stewart enjoys what she considers a typical girl's life. As she sings in the theme song, "Best of Both Worlds," during the title sequence of each episode:

> You get the best of both worlds/ Chill it out, take it slow/ Then you rock out the show. . ./ Who would've thought that a girl like me/ Would double as a superstar. . . / You get the best of both girls/ Mix it all together/ Oh yeah/ It's so much better cuz you know you've got the best of both worlds.

Miley Stewart "takes it slow" by attending public school, making friends (and enemies), hanging out on the beach, and pursuing her crushes. And as Hannah Montana she "rocks out the show" by attending parties with her celebrity friends, performing at concerts, appearing on talk shows, and getting hounded by fans and paparazzi in costume. While the world of school seems much different from the world of the rock concert, Miley's worlds are so interconnected that they are barely distinguishable from one another.

Miley's supposedly more mundane, "normal" life is directly facilitated by her stardom in ways that are rarely if ever mentioned within the show. Miley Stewart, her family, and, to some degree, her friends, have access to a wealth of privilege and resources—free time and disposable income, a spacious home on a scenic beachfront, control over their daily activities (with the exception of having to attend school), fulfilling social relationships, financial security, and family stability. Miley's mother passed away when she was younger, and her father, Robbie Ray, spends much of his time fixing snacks in the kitchen, styling and discussing his hair, napping, and playing guitar in the living room, giving a sense that Miley/Hannah may be the bread-winner in this family. Robbie Ray's domestic role and nearly constant presence in the home suggest a certain feminization and a challenge to stereotypical gender roles, perhaps leading one to assume that, in a somewhat masculine turn, Miley/Hannah's work sustains the family financially. In a few episodes Robbie Ray is described as being Hannah's manager; in a few others he is pictured doing the work of a producer, seated at the mixing board while Hannah records a song; in other episodes he writes songs both with and for Hannah; and once he even briefly resumes his own career as a touring musician. Yet, it is Hannah's fame that drives the show, her career that requires the family to live in Los Angeles, and her concerts that sell out the biggest arenas. While the economic function of Miley/Hannah's labor is seldom explored within the show, her music career is consistently framed as hard work that results in celebrity and privilege. In this way Miley/Hannah represents postfeminist "can-do" girlhood and complicates McRobbie's notion of the capable young woman. Miley Stewart's "normal" girlhood and her family's

livelihood are thus envisioned as contingent upon Hannah's stardom, blurring the divide between the two worlds she desperately wants to keep separate. Miley/Hannah's economic value is linked inextricably to the affective labors of being a girl, representing ideal girl-ness, institutionalized performance, and stardom.

Although Miley/Hannah may exemplify "can-do" girlhood through dedicated labor and "good choices," success (here, the continued fantasy of stardom) is not necessarily just the result of work or choice in *Hannah Montana* since it is only rarely questioned, always excessive and publicly displayed, and never really out of reach. This element of fantasy in Hannah's existence inflects, and is impacted by, Miley Cyrus' presence in the public eye. While her extraordinarily famous, blonde, more heavily costumed and stereotypically feminine self, Hannah Montana, might be envisioned as darker-haired Miley Stewart's alter-ego, she can also be understood as counterpart to Miley Cyrus. Hannah may trouble an otherwise stereotypical character, but she does so only to the extent that Miley Stewart makes an effort to convey that she prefers the "normal" life over the particularly feminine excesses of her celebrity life, all the while bolstered by the knowledge that her peers idolize, obsess over, and fantasize about her other self or selves. There is minimal disconnect between Miley's "two worlds," and both of her fictional lives are reflected in the experience of Miley Cyrus. As Erin Meyers has argued, "the blurring of the private/public distinction that occurs in celebrity media is essential for the maintenance of [a star's] power" ("Can You" 892). This iteration of the girl with a double life relies heavily on distinctions between celebrity and reality, between the essentialist construction of Miley's life as a typical girl's experience in

contrast to the glamour and entitlement of being Hannah. Boundaries are easily blurred when *Hannah Montana*'s version of reality depends upon the popularity and visibility of the fantasy, which in turn is presented as a reflection of the reality of the performer Miley Cyrus's very public life.

In the series' pilot episode, the apparent significance of the fantasy and the distinctions between Hannah and Miley (Stewart) are laid bare such that Miley's participation in the public sphere, as well as in performance work and consumer culture, makes her a younger representative of the "postfeminist masquerade" (McRobbie *The Aftermath* 64-67). Miley's power as a productive citizen must be disguised in particularly nonthreatening, feminine ways as she (i.e., Hannah Montana) steps into public view. But the "highly-styled disguise of womanliness" (instead, here, I would say "girly-ness") is imagined as Miley's own choice to take up the artifice of femininity in order to enact her power as an expressive subject (McRobbie *The Aftermath* 67; Blue "The Best"). In addition, through similar technologies of body maintenance and consumption, Hannah comes to embody what Raewyn W. Connell terms "emphasized femininity." Emphasized femininity refers to women's (or girls') compliance with male dominance through practices and behaviors—particularly oriented to "sexual receptivity in relation to younger women" (Connell 187). Connell's notion of emphasized femininity and McRobbie's notion of the postfeminist masquerade both center on women's reproduction of beauty conventions as a means of upholding the heterosexual contract. And while that element of choice, as McRobbie explains it, "becomes synonymous with a kind of feminism," it results in rituals of bodily maintenance that "constitute the post-feminist

masquerade as a feminine totality" (*The Aftermath* 66). If Hannah Montana is the embodiment of "feminine totality" for Miley Stewart, then Miley may be left lacking. As the pilot plays out, Miley's desire to hide her disguised self in order to live normally (though clearly, still a very privileged life), as well as the ways in which that hidden self exceeds her control, establishes itself as the premise of the series.

In that first episode, Miley's dad convinces her to reveal her secret identity to her best girlfriend, Lilly, who is one of Hannah's (many) biggest fans. Miley worries that Lilly will reject her for Hannah, clearly recognizing Hannah Montana's celebrity as a powerful force that threatens her "true" identity. After Lilly spoils the secret by sneaking into Hannah's dressing room backstage at a concert and seeing her without her sunglasses, Miley decides to show Lilly just what it means to be Hannah Montana. "Wait 'til you see this," Miley says, opening the closet door in her bedroom. Miley and Lilly step into the small closet with one vertical bar running its length, crowded with clothes and hat boxes. Lilly asks, "Why am I standing in your closet?" Miley replies, "Because, behind my closet is . . . my closet," sweeping aside the clothes and ceremoniously swinging open the previously hidden double doors, monogrammed with "HM." Hallelujahs ring out as Miley presents her vast, brightly lit closet. The camera closes in on Lilly as her jaw drops, then features her perspective in a series of close-ups on the color-coordinated shoes, clothes, and accessories that line the walls. "It's like a dream, a beautiful, beautiful dream," Lilly breathes, before rushing over to the nearest pair of boots. "O.K. Dream's over. I've got to have these!" Miley demonstrates the technological functions of the shoe racks to further astound Lilly, but when Lilly gets caught on the

rotating clothes rack and, in her excitement, calls Miley "Hannah," Miley gets upset—this is just what she feared would happen. Lilly's ecstasy at being invited into the private realm of her favorite superstar illustrates the impact of Hannah's celebrity, which feeds on the blurring of private and public worlds. Entry into "the Hannah closet" also reveals the extent of Miley's attempts to disguise the constructed nature of her celebrity persona. While disguising the work of stardom may be integral to the maintenance of the star persona, as Dyer has argued, the great reveal here also allows audiences an occasion to embrace fandom and celebrity aspirations through identification with Lilly and/or Miley (*Stars* 20). The excesses of the closet and its disguise make Hannah appear to be a meticulously constructed star persona. Yet, rather than dismantling that persona, this revealing moment suggests that pleasure can be found in trying on that image for one's self, one fashionable shoe at a time.

Although Lilly and Miley eventually resolve their conflict, Miley's fear of being displaced by Hannah Montana is clear in her worry, in the expansiveness of the previously hidden closet, in the monogrammed initials of her stage name, and in Lilly's reaction to it all. For Dyer, "the general image of stardom can be seen as a version of the American Dream, organized around the themes of consumption, success, and ordinariness" (*Stars* 35). Fear that the fantasy may overwhelm Miley's less excessive reality will plague her throughout the series, even though many of the things that distinguish Miley Stewart from Hannah Montana—Hannah's blonde wig, boots, sequined tops, and accessories—easily could be discarded or reappropriated. In this way, Hannah Montana is "a beautiful dream," as Lilly remarks. Of course, the other things that

distinguish Hannah—her substantial fan-base and her public performances and star persona—could be impossible for Miley to avoid if her secret were discovered. Constantly juxtaposed in relation to the greater authenticity of Miley's life as a typical girl, Hannah is constructed as an empty, yet powerful, fantasy to be experienced through and contained within the material excesses of contemporary femininity. Hannah Montana embodies the luminosity and performativity evident in Disney media and prevalent in girls' culture, such that Hannah Montana, and by extension, Miley Cyrus, brings to life the aesthetics of sparkle and the incitement to "shine" discussed throughout this chapter.

Meanwhile, Miley works to maintain those constraints within which she leads her double life. To live out her fantasy as a pop star, she must adopt the feminine accouterments mentioned above, disguising, if not implicitly attempting to improve upon herself to maintain her celebrity image and the very public career that sustains her family. While the Hannah closet reveals Lilly's materialistic girly-ness and Miley's insecurity, it also illuminates the significance of camp and gender performativity to the series, the (albeit anticipatory) transformative potential of "coming out" as Hannah, and the gender-queerness of liminal, postfeminist girlhoods. Kearney argues for further queer analysis of postfeminist girlhood in light of the aesthetic of sparkle and use of glitter in girls' contemporary culture, which have been seen as empowered forms of expression in queer cultures for decades ("Sparkle"). Rather than simply implicating girls in the reproduction of postfeminist aesthetics and rhetoric as many scholars have done, Kearney asks what transgressive, resistant, and/or identificatory pleasures girls might gain from participating in this culture. Queer analysis of *Hannah Montana* can help address this question.

Hannah's closet, Miley's flaming effeminate costumer Fermaine, Robbie Ray's overt—even homophobic—heteronormativity, and Miley's brother Jackson's comedic drag performance all appear, in the pilot episode, to reify heteronormativity within the context of the show's complicated updating of gender roles. If Miley's work as Hannah provides for her family, specifically for herself, her father, her brother, and in the later seasons for Lilly as well (when her parents cannot afford to house her), then the show's constant recuperation of heteronormative masculinity through humor must work to reify Miley, not as their provider, but as "just Miley," just a girl who "leads a totally normal life."[22] Hannah's closet provides a space for containing, regulating, and operationalizing (via the mechanics of the closet and the space's ostensible function as a dressing room) Hannah's feminine and material excesses, while also, as I have argued above, providing a space for Miley's, Lilly's, and the audience's consumption of and identification with Hannah. Further, the closet functions as a metaphor for Miley's "open secret" (Miller 207).

Miley tries until the final episodes of the series to keep Hannah secret, but ultimately she owes both her extraordinary circumstances and her relative "normalcy"—in essence, her life—to Hannah. She could not exist as she does without Hannah, and regardless of the fact that most characters on the show appear to be unaware that Miley harbors a secret identity, the secret is, in some sense, not a secret at all. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick quotes D.A. Miller regarding the function of secrecy, which can be understood as

[22] This is the tagline for the show, according to IMDB.com, accessed on 9 Dec. 2009.

> the subjective practice in which the oppositions of private/public, inside/outside, subject/object are established, and the sanctity of their first term kept inviolate. And the phenomenon of the "open secret" does not, as one might think, bring about the collapse of those binarisms and their ideological effects, but rather attests to their fantasmatic recovery. (Miller 207; Sedgwick 67)

Hannah is an extension of Miley and, as I argue below, the performative embodiment of emphasized femininity and the excessive girl-ness that structures all the other characters in Miley/Hannah's universe. While I do not mean to equate Hannah's closet or her "secret" with the gay closet or the silencing of non-heteronormative persons, Sedgwick's and Miller's concepts can illuminate how the closet functions in girls' media and in relation to the impossible ideals of femininity. Miley fears the increasing "openness" of her secret when she reveals to Lilly the machinations of becoming Hannah—the closet. Rather than simply "coming out" in this moment, Miley also lets others in to explore the closet for themselves/ourselves. Rather than collapsing the binarisms described by Miller and Sedgwick, as Miley fears will happen, here Miley's acts of both coming out and opening up the closet to Lilly and *Hannah Montana* viewers form the foundation of the series. As Sedgwick writes,

> "Closetedness" itself is a performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence—not a particular silence, but a silence that accrues particularly by fits and starts, in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it. (Sedgwick 3)

Miley's acts of both silence and revelation, the speech acts that constitute the closet and the performance of the open secret, structure the *Hannah Montana* narrative and its characterizations.

The Hannah closet, though shown only briefly, becomes more significant in the queer (or anti-queer, as the case may be) context of homophobic humor, drag, and effeminacy elsewhere in the show. In the pilot's introductory scene, Miley stands in her living room wearing her Hannah wig and being fitted by a White, middle-aged male tailor named Fermaine, whose mincing and effeminate mannerisms, vaguely European accent, and attire—a white suit vest, matching pants, and a red shirt, unbuttoned—code him as a stereotypical flaming gay man. When he bends over doing a dance and gets a "tushy tear" in his pants, he leaves quickly, telling Robbie Ray not to look at his "booty." Robbie Ray responds with a reassuring "Oh, no danger of that, partner." This initial shot of the family at home occurs in the open space of the kitchen/dining/living room, introducing the family and perhaps, Fermaine (although he reappears only once or twice throughout the series), as the show's primary characters. Miley's mother, a character who might have been assigned Fermaine's costuming duties or who, at the very least, likely would have been introduced, alongside her husband, in this domestic scene, is noticeably absent here. Her absence, and the absence of any other adult female, may be the primary impetus for the immediate delineation of Robbie Ray as uninterested in Fermaine's "booty." Although Robbie Ray's poise and casual dismissal of Fermaine's exposure may convey that Robbie Ray is decidedly *not* homosexual, the show's recuperation of heteronormative masculinity continues.

In a later sequence, Jackson stands in for Hannah when Fermaine returns to fit her for her costumes while she is away. Not only does Jackson pose in Hannah's sequined dress, but he wears her wig and is shot from behind to give the illusion of actually being

Miley dressed as Hannah. Robbie and Miley catch him in the act, but make light of it, saying "Daddy, he's finally cracked." And "You know what, son? I like it, but I don't think it goes with your shoes." Regular reference to familial relationships (precluded by scenes in which Jackson tries to impress a girl) and Fermaine's apparent effeminacy allow for some amusement at the expense of Jackson's manhood. The humor of Jackson's drag performance might also call attention to the total lack of humor in Miley's frequent application of the very same disguise. The feminine masquerade of Hannah's costume and wig gives Miley access to power, but on Jackson, the Hannah costume generates a homophobic joke. Robbie Ray seems to accept Jackson's feminine appearance quite easily, with no hint of insecurity about what this might mean either for Jackson's or for his own masculinity. Yet, he calls Jackson "son" as if to remind him (and the audience) of their relationship, referring to their maleness, if not also their heteronormative masculinity. It is Miley herself who points out the incoherence of Jackson's "Hannahfication," reifying her ownership of the masquerade and ignoring the ways in which Hannah's excessive femininity and performativity have spilled over onto the entire family.

Hannah is a subject with typically masculine power—a voice and efficacy in the public sphere, a certain level of productive citizenship, and visibility. But *Hannah Montana* constructs masculinity in opposition to girlhood in an attempt to recuperate the heterosexuality of Miley's (older) male family members who do not embody their conventional roles as more intelligent, rational, and productive citizens than young Miley. To appear more traditionally masculine, they are repeatedly juxtaposed against non-

normative masculinities, as well as in opposition to stereotypical femininity and girlhood. Yet their proximity to non-normative characters and the frequent references to the more feminine, and variably homophobic or homosocial, aspects of their lives and personalities are indicative of the possibilities for oppositional readings of both masculinity and girlhood available in the show. In the context of postfeminist discourses of gender and sexuality, Miley can be envisioned as a powerful subject whose work threatens to redefine hegemonic gender expectations. Her empowered—and quite feminine—subjectivity complicates heteronormative masculinity for Robbie Ray, Jackson, and Fermaine. Even so, the openings created may be stymied by the homophobic and misogynistic humor those characters so easily fall back on. Ultimately, Hannah Montana, like Miley Cyrus, remains a vehicle for Disney's trademark wholesomeness and for the normalization of idealized girlhood via luminous visibility.

Hannah Montana's "Alternative" Girlhood

In light of Hannah Montana's embodiment of emphasized femininity and the feminine totality of the postfeminist masquerade, it is productive also to explore the show's representations of possible alternatives to her idealized girlhood via Miley/Hannah's best friend Lilly Truscott (Emily Osment). Lilly makes a bold entrance early in the show's pilot episode as Miley's spunky, tomboyish best friend. She calls to announce she will be "landing in 20 seconds," and the Stewart family, not having revealed Miley's secret to Lilly yet, snaps to action to transform Miley into her "normal" self by concealing her sparkly pink Hannah costume. Jackson zips her into a blue hooded sweatshirt and swings open the doors through which Lilly will launch herself into the

house on her skateboard, sailing through the living room to grab Miley by the shoulders and announce with giddy excitement that she's "landed two tickets to the hottest concert in town!" Lilly may be the most girly, giddy "tomboy" sidekick ever scripted. She screams in delight from under her protective helmet, but Miley is speechless, knowing that Lilly is one of Hannah Montana's biggest fans and the concert can only be hers. Lilly's entrance emphasizes her more masculine (i.e., active) nature as a tomboy relative to Miley's doubled femininity via Hannah. But her aggressive "landing" is immediately counterbalanced by her excitement about the concert, which can be read both as particularly "girlish" and as an enactment of what Meenakshi Gigi Durham calls girls' "homospectatorial gaze" when it comes to young female pop stars.

Miley's cover in this scene—her wig-flattened hair, sneakers, jeans, sweatshirt, and her position (in this instance serving juice to her friend) at home surrounded by family—reinforces her connection to Lilly by variously hiding and demonstrating different markers of privileged femininity. Miley hides Hannah's perfect blonde "hair," custom-tailored bedazzled costume, space in the spotlight, and millions of fans, things Lilly does not possess; Miley demonstrates a straightforward domesticity and modesty that Lilly seems to share via their similar casual, sporty attire and the domestic setting of the home in which they spend much of their time. Their close friendship is clear in the familiarity between them, yet it isn't until later in the episode that Miley reveals her secret identity to Lilly. And in the following episode Lilly acquires her own secret identity, Lola Luftanza (later Lola Luftnagle), complete with brightly dyed, color-coordinated, shiny wigs and elaborately accessorized costumes, enabling her to

accompany Hannah to concerts, parties, and promotional events, bringing the two (or four, depending on how you count) even closer in their shared luminosity and secrecy.

As a self-professed tomboy, Lilly's form of female masculinity early in the series might seem easily confined to her youth, her interest in skateboarding, and the asexual nature of pre-pubescent girlhood. Yet as she becomes interested in romance, she does not abandon her active pursuits, friendships with boys, or her disregard for feminine propriety, much to Miley's chagrin. Still, Lilly remains a barely veiled girly girl—obsessed with Hannah's costumes and with boys—whose tomboyish qualities distinguish her only in superficial ways from Miley/Hannah's slightly more overt femininity. During the third episode of the second season, Miley sides with her popular, mean girl nemeses Amber and Ashley calling into question Lilly's understanding of "how to be a girl." Miley repeatedly begs Lilly to "act like a girl," and when Lilly protests, saying "I know how to be a girl," Miley responds by asking why she does not have a date for the upcoming dance. Lilly then admits that she has a crush on fellow skateboard enthusiast Matt, and agrees to let Miley take her shopping and make her over from "skate chick" to "date chick."

As a "skate chick," Lilly can express a type of alternative girlhood (Kelly, Pomerantz, and Currie 130). According to Kelly, Pomerantz and Currie, alternative girlhood consists of a "range of ways that girls consciously position themselves against what they perceive as the mainstream in general and against conventional forms of femininity in particular" (130). Skater girlhood, then, can function in opposition to the emphasized femininity that defines Hannah (Connell). By claiming allegiance to a

fluctuating set of negotiated practices and ways of being, like those associated with skater girlhoods—those whose focus generally does not revolve around normative sexual receptivity—girls such as Lilly can oppose established structures of patriarchal domination that would otherwise require them to appear feminine and (hetero)sexually receptive (Connell 183; Kelly, Pomerantz, and Currie 131).

The above exchange between Miley and Lilly blatantly calls attention to the performativity of femininity and heterosexuality while anchoring them firmly in a heteronormative romance narrative in which girls must seek approval and attention from boys on the basis of their ability to successfully perform femininity. When Miley gives Lilly her "date chick" makeover, Lilly gets to try on the sparkle and shine usually reserved for Hannah (or mean girls Amber and Ashley). Lilly walks into school on platform wedges, her hair blown out and long instead of pulled back or hidden under a hat, and wearing a tight skirt and a strapless pink top, multiple shiny gold necklaces, big gold earrings and bracelets, and designer sunglasses, carrying her books and a trendy large leather shoulder bag. She looks a lot like Hannah here, but in Lilly's words, she also looks "like Amber and Ashley threw up on [her]." Miley's "Hannahfication" of Lilly ultimately does not take since the options for conventionally gendered behaviors and beings are limited to impossible, unnuanced ideals. Lilly's crush, Matt, reveals that he was more interested in the "real" (i.e., the skate chick) Lilly, and Lilly chooses to re-articulate her "alternative" girlhood rather than try to uphold the tenets of emphasized femininity that appeal more to Miley/Hannah.

Lilly's maturing body and more feminine clothing, styled hair, and make-up do,

however, contribute to her more feminized look in the later seasons. Yet, even as Lilly dresses in more feminine attire and pays more attention to her hair and make-up as the series progresses and she ages, her secret identity, celebrity double Lola Luftnagle, can be read as an embodiment of parodic camp from the very beginning. Her name is reminiscent of The Kinks' hit song, "Lola," about a man discovering he's fallen for a transvestite. And, rather than link her instead to Nabokov's Lolita and versions since, Lilly's costumes are not revealing or overtly sexual, nor do they emphasize a feminine figure. They are excessive and work to disguise her body—brightly colored and thoroughly accessorized, she seems to wear a different neon wig for every outfit. Further the Lola costumes frequently incorporate pants among their layers, as well as high contrast color, fabric, and pattern combinations. While Miley's Hannah costumes suggest a single, familiar and idealized blonde entity, Lola's garb appears to put Lilly in a sort of drag, as her costumes and affectations constantly shift away from the convincingly realistic. Lola's costumes could not be further from her "everyday" clothes or actual hair.

As a tomboy, Lilly may be always/already performing masculinity through a female body, but Lilly and Lola cannot sustain the dissonance between their (shared) sex and gender necessary to theorize a drag performance here. In fact, it is difficult to categorize Lilly's performance as Lola simply as a performance of gender, since class status also differentiates Lilly from Miley/Hannah. The impetus for the creation of Lola is to give Lilly a way to access the privileged status of the young socialites and celebrities that surround Hannah Montana. While Lola's luminous appearance and behaviors call attention to the excesses and efforts employed to generate a more spectacular and

feminine presentation of girlhood for Lilly, the result, in part due to Lilly's status as a working-class girl, is also a kind of failed femininity. For Connell, "Central to the maintenance of emphasized femininity is practice that prevents other models of femininity gaining cultural articulation" (188). As Lilly attempts to comply with Miley's sense of feminine propriety modeled on Hannah, she performs an exaggeration of youthful femininity in a collection of wigs. Lola's wigs come in a host of artificially shiny, bright, pastel, and neon colors, and they call attention to the apparatus of her particular masquerade—especially in relation to Hannah's normalized masquerade of blonde girly-ness. In this way, Lilly's Lola disguise can work as a foil to Miley's Hannah, never threatening to displace Hannah's idealized girlhood. While Lilly enjoys the blinding visibility offered by Lola's fabricated femininity, Lola remains unable to fit in with the rich, young female celebrities and socialites she aims to mimic and also to mock.

When Lilly brings Lola to life as Hannah's best friend in the fifth episode of season one, Hannah's socialite pal, Traci Van Horn (Romi Dames) immediately labels her "weird" and "uncool." Backstage before a sold-out Hannah Montana concert, Traci comments on the "weird girl" in Hannah's dressing room, who is sticking her tongue in the chocolate fountain. When Lola appears, covered in chocolate, chattering at top speed, and easily distracted by celebrity sightings (including Gwen Stefani and Orlando Bloom), Traci's assessment proves accurate, and Hannah feels the need to try and keep Lola under wraps. Later in the episode, Hannah reveals her dilemma to Lilly by pointing out that it is embarrassing for them both when Lola walks around covered in food and obsesses over every celebrity she sees. And Lilly/Lola adapts accordingly, though ultimately her

obsession with Orlando Bloom is allowed to run rampant when Hannah lets her follow him into one of Traci's fancy parties. As usual, Hannah manages to be the arbiter of feminine propriety, even when it comes to Lilly's performance of a tomboy in drag. Lilly/Lola, then, apparently needs Hannah's guidance if she means to blend with the likes of Traci Van Horn, the shrill, stylized, feminine, spoiled teen celebrity that rules Hannah's social calendar.

In a season two episode titled "The Test of My Love," Lola reveals herself to be the same rambunctious, star-struck sidekick whom Traci must tolerate and whom Hannah must learn to appreciate. When Lilly volunteers herself as Lola to take Hannah's place in Traci's "Put-Put for Puppies" charity event so that Miley can go on a date with a boy, Traci fears Lola's presence will ruin her event. Traci eventually calls Hannah to complain, and we catch a glimpse of Lola in the background clamoring head-first over a fence to chase down her crush, actor Orlando Bloom. While Miley's penchant for a somewhat reserved femininity keeps her policing Lilly's conventionally more masculine behaviors and interests, repeated references to Lilly's interest in boys and heterosexual romance work to seal the deal (in a heteronormative sense) between her female body and her performances of femininity. In contrast to the regressive potential offered up by Lilly/Lola's version of the postfeminist masquerade, Lilly's demonstrations of desire in instances like this one are also progressive in light of the routine silencing of girls' sexual desires.

CONCLUSION: FROM WISHING UPON A STAR TO BECOMING A STAR

To be understood as a girl, "a lucky girl" who deep down is "just like you," Miley

Stewart relies upon the mundane, supposed ordinariness of her home and school experiences, but her leisurely life in Malibu cannot be sustained without her career as famous singer, Hannah Montana. And as the normalization of White, upper-middle-class girlhood in the program reveals, she also needs to avoid questioning what differences may lay between her and "you" in her audience. Tensions between Miley's desires for both a normal girlhood and the enjoyment of her extraordinary celebrity drive the show, while the breakdown of that manufactured binary signals its end. Though Hannah Montana is one in a long history of Disney's female characters—in animation, reality-based and live-action films and television—whose femininity is enacted joyfully in the aesthetics and maintenance of the body for the pleasure of others, she also challenges gender expectations. As I have discussed above, Miley Stewart's celebrated alter ego allows her to publicly express the contradictions in her life, as a powerful subject with a voice and a career and as a girl living within structures of power that work to contain and control her. As McRobbie argues in relation to contemporary young women:

> It has now become a feature of women's lives, indeed an entitlement, to move from out of the shadows, into a spotlight of visibility, into a luminosity which has the effect of a dramatization of the individual, a kind of spectacularisation of feminine subjectivity, which becomes the norm. (*The Aftermath* 125)

The sort of spectacular feminine "empowerment" generated through luminosity can be turned against girls and women in the context of postfeminist discourse, in which the choices they make (or are limited to) may serve as not only regressive, ritual reproductions of femininity, but as particularly anti-feminist strategies employed for commercial gain.

When *Hannah Montana* debuted on Disney Channel, the network created a live-action princess of sorts—a wholesome pop princess, "with an edge." As Hopkins argues, "the popstar is now the real people's princess, having worked her way from suburbia to the spotlight" (189). Hannah Montana's and Miley Cyrus's apparently simultaneous pursuit of fame brought a fantasy of celebrity and pop stardom to life, and together they helped to realistically represent that "modern" princess persona promoted by Disney since the late 1980s. With the record-breaking theatrical release of *Hannah Montana & Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds Concert* 3D film in 2008,[23] further attention was drawn not only to Disney Channel's girl audiences, but also to the value of lucrative tween girl audiences for pop music and film.[24] The success of this girl-driven franchise arguably may have precipitated the creation of Disney's younger animated princesses, Rapunzel (*Tangled*), Merida (*Brave*), and Sofia (*Sofia the First*),[25] to more closely resemble teen, tween, and pre-school girl audiences, respectively. Certainly, *Hannah Montana*'s success has directly contributed to Disney's development of several more girl-driven franchise properties and the cultivation of multiple young, female performers on Disney Channel, some of whom are discussed in the following chapters.

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[23] *Variety* reports that the film was a surprise hit, earning $65 million in ticket sales (Huntington A5).

[24] Hannah Montana's success can be understood as an extension of the increased attention to girls as media markets that began, as I discuss in this dissertation's introduction, in the mid- to late-1990s with the girl-driven popularity of feature films *Titanic* (1997) and *Clueless* (1995) and the Spice Girls pop franchise (1994 forward).

[25] The traditional heroines of the Disney oeuvre shining brighter than ever, Disney also has introduced Sofia the First, the first princess meant to both appeal to and to represent 2-7-year-old girls. While she's described as a "first" for Disney because she's not focused on Prince Charming and she's "more relatable" than adult princesses, the imagery promoting the release of her Disney Channel Original Movie (in 2013) suggests some glaring similarities with those more stereotypical Disney heroines.

Because girls constitute increasingly significant target markets for popular U.S. media and consumer products yet are sometimes overlooked in theories of postfeminism, this project necessarily attempts to carve out space for understanding discourses of contemporary girlhood within postfeminist media culture. *Hannah Montana* is a rich text for such analysis. The show's iterations of a postfeminist masquerade present a performance of luminous "girly-ness" (particularly via Hannah Montana and her connection to Miley Cyrus) as the goal of celebrity and as an aspirational choice for girls—as distinguishable from notions of an authentic girlhood. Thus, Hannah Montana embodies Disney's aesthetics of sparkle—she shines. And White, class-privileged, performative, and highly visible girlhood becomes normalized through characters like Hannah Montana and, to some degree, Miley Stewart and Lilly Truscott, and is, inherently, inseparable from the performances of postfeminist girl-ness that sustain those characters and their world. Instances of emphasized femininity, juxtaposed with instances of failed femininity, contribute to the show's construction of fragmented and alternative girlhoods. Yet, the doubling used to reproduce resistant or oppositional representations of girlhood works also to uphold heteronormative gender conventions—the so-called alternative girl reifies both the "normal" girl and the celebrated tween idol. The use of stereotypical as well as alternative gender presentation(s) in *Hannah Montana* illustrates some of the tensions that may arise in girl-focused programs that attempt to sustain normative, hegemonic representations of gender while addressing girls as always/already "empowered" subjects. Reading this program through a postfeminist framework, however, also reveals how such "empowerment" can be put to work in the service of

heteronormative gender conventions to construct girlhood as powerful only as it conforms to a postfeminist sensibility.

While Hannah Montana may exemplify the postfeminist masquerade of girly-ness, her excesses and those of Miley Cyrus complicate Hannah's normative, idealized status. In addition, girls of color represented on Disney Channel and rising to fame as Disney franchise properties also can complicate notions of the White/blonde, middle-class postfeminist ideal. As Sarah Projansky insists in her forthcoming book, *Spectacular Girls: Media Fascination and Celebrity Culture*, all girls are spectacular, but not all girls are spectacularized in the same way. She uses the term "spectacularized" to suggest the process through which contemporary girlhood is made intensely public, visible, and readily available for consumption and regulation in popular media. In Chapter two, I analyze the ways in which girl stars and their Disney Channel characters complicate representations of idealized White girlhood, while also exploring how discourses of race, ethnicity, and class structure girls' spectacularization in Disney Channel's girl-focused series and in celebrity culture.

Chapter 2: "True Colors": Race, Ethnicity, and Class Status in Disney Stardom and Disney Channel Series

INTRODUCTION

In her forthcoming book, *Spectacular Girls: Media Fascination and Celebrity Culture*, Sarah Projansky finds that U.S. media culture either ignores, marginalizes, or envisions with disdain non-normative girls—those Anita Harris might call "at-risk" girls—girls of color, queer girls, poor and working-class girls, girls who are large, differently abled, and/or who make "bad" choices. Projansky argues that popular media spectacularize these girls differently than their high-achieving, conventionally attractive yet not hyper-sexual, heteronormative White/blonde "can-do" counterparts, who are idealized without exception and, I argue, made luminous—especially in celebrity culture. As such, representations of girlhood in popular commercial media demand close attention to issues of age, race, class, gender, and sexuality. Girls' media scholars must continue to theorize girlhood in terms of shifting, gendered, sexualized, and classed racial formations, while also considering the other ways in which girls are marginalized or ignored in popular media. Such critical analysis and theorization is important in the context of contemporary postfeminist and postracial discourses, which downplay or ignore the institutionalized inequities that structure girls' identities and commercial representations of girlhood.

This dissertation evolved from a smaller project focused primarily on Miley Cyrus's celebrity image and her roles on Disney Channel. In the previous chapter, I explored the ways in which her characters Miley Stewart and Hannah Montana are

constructed as figures of luminosity via emphasized femininity and postfeminist discourse, which often seems blind to racial and class differences. Here, I complicate representations of girlhood on *Hannah Montana* with regard to its convoluted constructions of regional identity, class status and taste distinctions, Whiteness, and a problematic desire for ethnic differentiation within the context of postrace and color-blind ideologies. Whiteness and class privilege are foregrounded in most Disney Channel programs. In *Hannah Montana*, however, the pressures of ideal Whiteness and postfeminist gender expectations render the southern, "country" Stewart family "different" from their California milieu. This series is useful, then, for discussing the ways in which gender, age, race, ethnicity, and taste cultures intersect to both reify and disrupt idealizing discourses of White girlhood. Although Whiteness is normalized in this and many other Disney Channel programs, there are a few significant exceptions in which non-White casts and characters are privileged and in which racial and cultural difference are foregrounded.

That's So Raven (2003-2007) and *Wizards of Waverly Place* (2007-2012) are two of the most popular Disney series to spawn diversified franchises and both feature teen girl actors and characters of color. *Wizards of Waverly Place* represents Disney Channel's efforts to generate Latina/o audiences, while simultaneously normalizing Whiteness. The series features an urban working/middle-class family of mixed ethnicity—rare identities on Disney Channel and in U.S. television in general. *Wizards of Waverly Place* was also the vehicle that launched Selena Gomez's career and precipitated comparisons between Gomez and Cyrus. Gomez is distinguished in trade and popular

press as a Mexican-American girl whose small-town, poor Texan childhood and subsequent discovery by Disney allow for the construction of a Hollywood-inspired American dream mythos targeting growing Latina/o audiences.

While a few scholars have written about *Wizards of Waverly Place* and its star, Selena Gomez, *That's So Raven* has received more limited critical attention. Yet, like *Wizards of Waverly Place*, *That's So Raven* arguably has been very significant as a site of identification for White and non-White girl audiences,[26] and the latter show was also a proving ground for the franchise diversification that would only grow with subsequent Disney Channel series. On the heels of the comparably short-lived *Lizzie McGuire*/Hilary Duff Disney franchise (2001-2004), *That's So Raven* capitalized on new avenues to popularity and financial success for Disney Channel and other divisions of the Disney Company, as well as for star and producer Raven-Symoné (full name, Raven-Symoné Christina Pearson, alternately known also as Raven). With *That's So Raven*, the Disney Company streamlined its franchise marketing and diversification strategies (which I discuss further in Chapters three and four). *That's So Raven* was an early product of certain market and brand strategies that Disney personnel since envision as coming to fruition when applied to Miley Cyrus and *Hannah Montana* just a few years later. *That's So Raven* is also an important case for understanding how Blackness is constructed on Disney Channel; it has a majority-Black cast and stands out among the many Disney Channel programs that privilege Whiteness.

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[26] In 2005, *That's So Raven* ranked "No. 1 with tween girls ages 9 to 14 in African-American and Hispanic families—and No. 2 with White tween girls" (Samuels 50).

While this chapter focuses on the intersections of gender, age, class, race, and ethnicity within these three Disney series, I also consider critical and popular reception of the girl performers who act in the series, since their star images directly influence and are influenced by their characters and the merchandising and promotion of their franchises. The complexity of the role of the star in driving these girl-centered franchises is often overlooked in popular press, entertainment trades, and scholarly criticism. Through various forms of labor, many of which are rendered invisible—as femininized, affective labors frequently are—Raven-Symoné, Selena Gomez, and Miley Cyrus give life to these franchises, hail audience members, nurture fan-bases, create media content, and actively market their franchises and the parent company. As I have discussed in Chapter one, these girls' seemingly "invisible" affective labors both generate and rely upon their public visibility. To further illustrate the labor of these girl stars and their portrayals of variously ethnic and de-ethnicized girl characters on Disney Channel, in this chapter, I employ discursive, ideological, and narrative analysis of their three popular prime-time series. Critical analysis of statements by Disney personnel and performers in popular press and trade publications augment close readings of selected episodes of *That's So Raven*, *Hannah Montana*, and *Wizards of Waverly Place*. The primary question that guides this chapter is: how might representations of girls in these three series complicate Disney's construction of an idealized, economically privileged, White postfeminist girlhood?

THEORETICAL & DISCURSIVE FRAMEWORKS

Since the publication of Michael Omi and Howard Winant's foundational text,

Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s, greater attention has been paid to the significance of race in multiple fields of scholarship. In *Racial Formation in the Twenty-First Century*, Priya Kandaswamy distills Omi and Winant's invaluable insights—"that race is not reducible to ethnicity, class, or nation; that racial categorization shifts and changes over time; and that the state is a preeminent site of racial struggle" (Kandaswamy 23). Part of my project here, then, is to uphold this understanding of race as socially constructed and always in flux.

Kandaswamy is one of several scholars who have intervened over the past two decades to bring attention to and critique Omi and Winant's discussion of race and racialization in the United States. Kandaswamy illuminates the importance of understanding identities as they intersect with one another, arguing that "racial formation is fundamentally a gendered and sexualized process" (25). For her,

> thinking about race and gender as constituted in and through each other challenges Omi and Winant's assertion that race is an independent and distinct category of analysis that can be thought about in isolation from other kinds of difference. (26)

Having originated in women of color feminism and having proliferated also in Third Wave feminism, intersectionality is necessary for understanding the ways in which identities are constructed, performed, and reproduced. Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term "intersectionality" in 1989, with regard to Black women's employment experiences and applied it to issues of violence against women of color in her 1991 article, "Mapping the Margins." She contends that "the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender

dimensions of women's experiences separately" (Crenshaw 1244). Patricia Hill Collins later popularized the concept when she adopted the term to describe her theoretical perspective in *Black Sexual Politics*. For Collins, "Intersectional paradigms view race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and age, among others, as mutually constructing systems of power" (11). Although "untangling their effects . . . remains difficult," attempting to do so is important to this dissertation and this chapter, in particular (Collins 11).

Kandaswamy's intervention, with its theoretical roots in intersectionality, is useful, then, for critiquing postfeminist culture and theories of postfeminism, which, more often than not, ignore systemic inequalities enacted on the basis of difference other than gender. If, according to intersectional identity politics, women of color are understood as being at least doubly marginalized, then non-White[27] girls are triply marginalized as a result of their femininity, race, and age. More than just ignoring inequalities of gender, race, and age,

> postfeminism seeks to erase any progress toward racial inclusion that feminism has made since the 1980s. It does so by making racial difference, like feminism itself, merely another commodity for consumption. (Springer 251)

Thus, analyzing the shifting and variable racialization of girls in postfeminist media culture can allow for a better understanding of the ways in which girls are made available for consumption, commodified, exploited, and, likewise, how girls brand and market themselves and police each other—the ways in which they are spectacularized.

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[27] Here, I use Dyer's preferred term "non-White" over the term "people of color," since the latter "reiterates the notion that some people have colour and others, Whites, do not" (*White* 11).

The history of institutionalized White-supremecist heteronormative patriarchy in the U.S., in conjunction with the contemporary neoliberal postfeminist turn, has resulted in the spectacularization of White girlhood as an ideal/idealized subject position. Richard Dyer argues that "the identification of women with Whiteness, and men as searchers after Whiteness, is central to the construction of skin White people" (*White* 74). Idealized Whiteness seems, then, to rely inherently on conventions of chaste femininity (Dyer *White* 74). If ideal femininity is both White and chaste, then White *girls* may be particularly well-positioned to represent ideal femininity. As I explain in the introduction to this dissertation, Anita Harris argues that it is the "can-do" girl who becomes the "ideal subject" in late modernity (*Future*). While girls of color, queer girls, sexually active girls, and poor and working class girls may have access to some qualities of "can-do" girl-ness (such as flexibility, entrepreneurism, self-confidence, and ambition), they also may continue to be marginalized by race, class status, and non-normative sexualities—and thus are more often envisioned as "at-risk" girls. Whiteness, sexual innocence, traditional femininity, and middle-class-ness, then, converge in the construction of the ideal girl.

For Dyer, "the power value of Whiteness resides above all in its instabilities and apparent neutrality, [though] the colour does carry the more explicit symbolic sense of morality and also aesthetic superiority" (*White* 70). Yet, "there are also gradations of Whiteness" mostly based on ethnic and class differentiations, most often bound up in poor and working-class identities (Dyer *White* 12). The neutral power of Whiteness and its normalization in popular media, as well as the gradation of Whiteness, which can also be understood as ethnic Whiteness and can lead to notions of failed Whiteness

(particularly in "White trash" identities), are all integral to my analysis of *Hannah Montana* and Miley Cyrus' star image in this chapter. In order to reify White humanity and feminine propriety, popular discourse constructs Blackness as the epitome of difference, but this construction of Blackness may also allow for those gradations of Whiteness—for the construction of differences within Whiteness, which are so often rendered invisible, neutral, normal, and de-ethnicized.

While ideals of femininity and Whiteness are interdependent, both exist dichotomously to Blackness, such that "White Western normality [has been] constructed on the backs of Black deviance, with an imagined Black hyper-heterosexual deviance at the heart of the enterprise" (Collins 120). Heteronormative sexualization is endemic to the spectacularization of women and girls, although, as Projansky argues and Collins demonstrates, its manifestations vary according to race and class connotations. Collins finds that Black women have been stigmatized as being "more 'masculine' than White women," as a result of White-supremecist constructions of deviant Black sexuality (Collins 135). Collins argues that

> the alleged deviancy of people of African descent lay in their sexual promiscuity, a "wildness" that also was believed to characterize animal sexuality. Those most proximate to animals, those most lacking in civilization, also were those humans who came closest to having the sexual lives of animals. Lacking the benefits of Western civilization, people of African descent were perceived as having a biological nature that was inherently more sexual than that of Europeans. (100)

In popular discourse, Black women continue to be alternately hypersexualized as deviant and desexualized as more masculine than the White feminine ideal, both as a result of the association of Blackness with "wildness."

Collins demonstrates that, in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century U.S. culture, dominant ideologies of class, race, and gender together dictate controlling images of Black women as either welfare-dependent or working-class "'Bitches' and Bad (Black) Mothers," or as middle-class "Modern Mammies, Black Ladies, and 'Educated Bitches'" (123, 138). Although poor and working-class Blackness has been constructed as "authentic" Blackness, poor and working-class Black femininities "become texts of what *not* to be" (Collins 137, 139). As Gayle Wald argues:

> in a patriarchal context in which women's value is conflated with their sexuality and sexual conformity, middle-class White women are deemed "naturally" virtuous, whereas black women, especially poor black women, are deemed "naturally" degraded or corrupt or are removed from the realm of adult sexuality altogether. (155)

African-American women striving to access middle-class status, then, must "reject this gender-specific version of authenticity in favor of a politics of respectability" (Collins 139).

Regarding popular media representations, Collins argues that *The Cosby Show*'s Claire Huxtable (played by Phylicia Rashad, 1984-1992) "exemplifies the new Black lady invented for middle- and upper-middle-class African American women" (139). Claire was "beautiful, smart, and sensuous. No cornrows, gum chewing, cursing, miniskirts, or plunging necklines existed for her" (Collins 139-140). Further, the show's focus on Claire's presence in the home, rather than at work, meant that, within this exemplary representation, "Black women's sexuality was safely contained to domestic space, and within the confines of heterosexual marriage" (Collins 140). Describing

another of television's Black lady characters,[28] Collins writes, "She uses standard American English, dresses impeccably, and always has a dignified demeanor" (141). The Black lady, then, is the middle-class ideal for Black femininity, and she must navigate the ideological tensions between the hypersexualized construction of working-class Black femininity and the desexualizing potential of the hard work necessary to achieve and sustain middle-class-ness. Yet, these images of the middle-class Black lady "helped shape a discourse about racial integration and African American women's place in it," particularly by aligning them with White middle-class values (Collins 147). In this way, these contemporary stereotypes of Black womanhood in popular media—inflected, I would argue, by a postfeminist sensibility—help to justify color-blind racism in the United States (Collins 147; Gill).

A consideration of the functions of race within postfeminist girls' media culture also requires, then, an understanding of contemporary discourses of color-blind racism and postracism—as well as multi-racial identities and ethnic ambiguity, which I discuss further in the final case study of this chapter in relation to Selena Gomez and *Wizards of Waverly Place*. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva explains that since the Civil Rights movement, "color-blind racism [has become] the dominant ideology" and "a formidable political tool for the maintenance of the racial order" (2-3). At the heart of color-blind racism lies the myth of America as a post-racial society—the myth "that race has all but disappeared as a factor shaping the life chances of all Americans" (Bonilla-Silva 208). While postfeminism is deployed in order to uphold heteronormative gender roles, relegating

[28] Here, Collins describes Ella Farmer (played by Lynn Thigpen) from *The District* (CBS 2000-2004).

feminism to the past and rejecting claims of gender inequality, postracial ideology is fueled by the assumption that racial inequities have been corrected since the end of the Civil Rights movement. These ideologies work together to depoliticize representations of girlhood and to render insignificant the multiple marginalizations of girls of color, poor and working-class girls, and queer or sexually active girls in U.S. popular culture. Although Martell Teasley and David Ikard argue that "we are fundamentally dealing with old ideas that have found new life," the still fairly recent 2008 election of America's first African-American president, Barack Obama, continues to be cited as proof of racial equality and the assumption that issues of race no longer matter (413). Instead, as Mary Beltrán and Camilla Fojas point out, Obama's election may more accurately represent a cultural shift over the past few decades toward celebrating—or at least celebratizing—multiracial or mixed race identities in the United States (1).

Historically, fear of miscegenation in the U.S. has meant the silencing and erasure of mixed race bodies, but mixed race couples were more prevalent by the 1960s, and the growing multiracial youth population in the 1990s precipitated a slew of advocacy groups who lobbied for changes to federal census categories (Beltrán and Fojas 6). Today, scholars debate the cultural implications of the increasing and increasingly heroic visibility of mixed race bodies in popular media, their arguments falling somewhere along a spectrum, according to Beltrán and Fojas, "between the extremes of "color-blind" and "color-focused" interpretations" (7). For Beltrán, in particular, the shift toward greater mixed race representation has contributed to a "new racelessness" ("The New Hollywood"), in which ambiguously ethnic bodies and characterizations stand in for

cultural diversity in popular film and television in the United States. Focusing primarily on contemporary mixed race Latina stardom, Beltrán argues that the "multiculti wave" in popular culture may create more casting opportunities for mixed Latina actors, but that it may also "threaten to halt progress toward increasingly diverse and dimensional Latino images" (*Mixed Race* 265). She explores the publicity and promotion of stars Jessica Alba and Rosario Dawson to reveal that critical and popular reception, as well as casting opportunities, can vary in relation to how ethnically coded a star appears to be or how her ethnic heritage is perceived. While some stars, such as Dawson, may be able to use ethnic and racial identifications to boost their celebrity and attract ethnic, so-called "niche" audiences, ethnic ambiguity, exemplified in Beltrán's study by Jessica Alba's "off-White appearance," can make a star marketable to a wider audience (*Mixed Race* 259).

Angharad Valdivia envisions the racial hybridity and ethnic ambiguity described by Beltrán as part of the postfeminist trend in popular television representation migrating to children's media production since the early 2000s ("Mixed Race" 275). Tween culture traffics in postfeminist values, particularly when it foregrounds "style and consumption over political and social gender politics" (Valdivia "Mixed Race" 275). Sarah Banet-Weiser makes a similar claim about girls' consumer culture more broadly, arguing that, race and postfeminist "girl power" "produce categories of identity that are defined by ambiguity rather than specificity, ambivalence rather than political certainty . . . within the specific context of late industrial capitalism in the United States" ("What's Your" 203). When it comes to girls' media, Valdivia explains, Disney's focus on tweens "is an age, gender, and racial affair" that relies both "on the disposable income of that affluent

younger demographic—that is assumed to be White—and the added component that . . . this target cohort will spend more money on appearance, clothing, and general lifestyle products" ("Mixed Race" 275). Thus, although socio-economic class is still woefully under-discussed in media scholarship, tween media is also an affair to do with class status. And, as Annalee Newitz and Matthew Wray argue, "leaving class out of antiracist criticism not only creates a theoretical blind spot but also can lead to class prejudice" (170). Exploring girls' film and television franchises such as *Johnny Tsunami* (1999-2007), *Lizzie McGuire* (2000-2004), and *The Cheetah Girls* (2003-2008), Valdivia points out that racial difference is sometimes conflated with or displaced by class difference. Comparing the protagonists from these franchises, she finds that most of them are middle-class, but the presence of "the White-looking," working-class Dorinda in *The Cheetah Girls* "allows for issues of class and wealth to enter the narrative" ("Mixed Race" 283, 277). Dorinda is different because she is part of a working-class family, rather than because of her ethnic ambiguity. (She is adopted and her heritage is unknown/unknowable.)

While *Johnny Tsunami* and *The Cheetah Girls* are both, according to Valdivia, "about difference," represented through class distinctions and racial hybridity, I would argue that *Lizzie McGuire* is a postracial text, privileging Whiteness and employing persons of color "for the sake of visual diversity" ("Mixed Race" 282). Lizzie McGuire "epitomizes Whiteness—she is a lovable, healthy, affluent blonde," whereas *The Cheetah Girls'* Dorinda "turns on their head dominant narratives about race, class, and bodily expression" as an ethnically ambiguous, poor, White girl who is also the best dancer of

the group (Valdivia "Mixed Race" 282, 284). Valdivia inadvertently also reveals the presence of postracial ideology in *The Cheetah Girls* when she states that the *Cheetah Girls* universe is one in which "racial identity is varied and not a source of conflict" ("Mixed Race" 283). Rather than just subverting dominant discourses of race and class, then, *The Cheetah Girls* simultaneously constructs non-White girls as postracial subjects.

Similarly, in relation to Black girlhoods on Disney Channel, Sarah E. Turner has argued that the network takes up colorblind discourse and relies on the "Black Best Friend Formula" for racial diversity in a few of its contemporary programs. In these programs, Whiteness is privileged and Black girls are represented as nurturing friends, sassy sidekicks, and are drawn from the "Mammy" and "Magical Negro" stereotypes (Turner "Disney Does" 136). While Black best friend characters may perpetuate colorblind discourse, they may also contribute to the "multiculti" trend described by Beltrán. Disney Channel continues to privilege representations of Whiteness, as the majority of U.S. television networks do, but since 2003 it simultaneously has offered more racially diverse representations while also frequently avoiding overt references to race or markers of cultural difference. In contemporary Disney programs like *Shake It Up*, for instance, mixed race cast members portray unambiguously Black and Latino/a characters, though with minimal reference to ethnicities or cultural differences. Attempts by Disney to code certain characters as Black or Latina/o without marking or referencing cultural difference, in addition to attempts to code mixed race performers as unambiguously Black or Latina/o, reproduces colorblind racial discourse and also constrains or misconstrues the very cultural and ethnic diversity the show means to

exploit in order to expand and diversify its audience.

RAVEN-SYMONÉ'S UNRULY BLACK FEMININITY

Prior to the massive successes of the music and performance-centered made-for-TV movie franchise *High School Musical* and series *Hannah Montana*, Raven-Symoné helped boost Disney Channel ratings when she starred in the made-for-TV movie *The Cheetah Girls* (Prod. David Geffen and Whitney Houston 2003) and the channel's first series to span 100 episodes, *That's So Raven* (2003-2006). *The Cheetah Girls* was a performance-centered adaptation of a popular young adult book series and spawned several albums, two sequels, three concert tours, a television pilot for ABC, and multiple avenues of merchandising and licensing. The movie was Disney's first television musical, and it attracted over 6.5 million viewers when it premiered on Disney Channel in August 2003, making it the network's most-watched movie at the time ("Cute *Cosby* Kid").[29] The *Cheetah Girls* franchise delivered a significant tween girl audience for pop music, home entertainment, merchandise, and book series, based in part on Disney's tried and true formula in which multi-talented performers who act and sing and dance could be marketed and diversified across media platforms and licensing opportunities—now to a greater extent than they had been previously. Not only could a television series translate into books and feature films, products and soundtracks, but the girl performer herself was now understood as a potentially lucrative franchise property that the Walt Disney Company aimed to keep hold of for as long as she was relevant to its various divisions.

[29] In the first two movies (*The Cheetah Girls* and *Cheetah Girls: One World*) Raven-Symoné plays one of four teen girls living in New York City who dream of becoming famous for their music.

Indeed, as discussed further in Chapter four, Disney executives continue to cite a shift toward "owning" talent and programming and embedding their music into programs in the early 2000s as the primary strategies for making the network so successful (IRTS Seminar notes).

"Talent," in the case of *That's So Raven*, refers to Raven-Symoné. Ownership, in this instance, ostensibly is constituted by a series of binding documents not too dissimilar from contracts made between stars and studios during the classical Hollywood era. If President of Entertainment at Disney Channels Worldwide, Gary Marsh, can claim that Disney "owns" talent, such as Raven-Symoné, the company must also, then, have devised constraints or boundaries within which she is expected to operate. Without addressing the specifics of her contracts with the company, the argument can be made that Disney defines at least the practical constraints of her tenure with the company, if not also the discursive constraints generated as a result of the subject position in which such contracts work to locate Disney stars. These constraints can be brought to light through attention to related media industry events, popular commentary, and Disney corporate discourse, as well as to Disney Channel texts featuring the star.

Disney Channel pursued production of *That's So Raven* after shooting a pilot in 2001 and began broadcasting the show in January 2003—just a few months before failing to negotiate a satisfactory contract renewal with Hilary Duff after two seasons of *Lizzie McGuire*. It was widely publicized that Duff had requested higher pay-rates for a third season and a sequel to *The Lizzie McGuire Movie* after earning $1 million for her role in the first film, which had grossed $37 million (Sussman). That same year, Disney Channel

entertainment head Rich Ross expressed concern over the risk posed by hit shows to Disney's bottom line: "Once a show is a hit, producers and stars can renegotiate deals, and costs can balloon" (Boorstin "Disney's 'Tween Machine'"). Yet this wasn't the only reason for the 65-episode cap on individual series established by Disney Channel at the time. Not only would Ross have liked to avoid having to renegotiate contracts and, ostensibly, avoid paying stars and producers more based on the success of their work, but there was also an accepted logic that young stars—I would argue, girls in particular—as well as their fans would likely "age out" of relevance for the network after a matter of two or three seasons. Young actors and audience members grow and change rapidly during childhood and adolescence—physically, emotionally, and mentally. Actors must navigate the potential disparity between their bodies and their characters, while producers worry that older audience members will out-grow the program, while younger audience members may not identify with the character whose star is significantly older than her character and/or her audience.

While the *Lizzie* franchise was fading away and Duff was pursuing a music career and her own branding efforts independent of Disney, Raven-Symoné committed to starring in the network's standard 65 episodes (two or three seasons) of *That's So Raven*. *Raven*'s popularity and merchandising successes motivated Disney to allow the contract to be extended to 100 episodes, and Symoné eventually also earned the title of Executive Producer on the show. By the time *That's So Raven* began shooting, Raven was well-known to adult audiences who had seen her as a pre-schooler on *The Cosby Show* (NBC 1984-1992) and a grade-schooler on *Hangin' with Mr. Cooper* (ABC 1992-1997). And

she was familiar to tweens and teens who recognized her from *Kim Possible* (Disney Channel, 2002-2007), *Dr. Doolittle* (1998; *Dr. Doolittle 2* in 2001), and *Zenon: Girl of the 21st Century* (1999).

In 2003, when *That's So Raven* premiered, Marsh promoted the show saying:

> It's refreshing to see girls do physical comedy, girls who are confident enough with themselves to appear goofy and out of control . . . *That's So Raven* is our attempt to bring back physical comedy in a narrative format where you really care about the characters. ("Former *Cosby*")

The show relies heavily on Raven-Symoné's unruly performances of physical comedy, incorporating exaggerated movements and costumes, boisterous exchanges, and silly escapades into each episode—more-so than other Disney girl-centered shows before and since, including *Lizzie McGuire*, *Hannah Montana*, *Sonny with a Chance*, *Wizards of Waverly Place*, and *Shake It Up*. Marsh's assessment of the show's brand of humor was taken up and expanded upon by popular critics and journalists as well. Throughout the original broadcast of the series' four seasons, Raven-Symoné won comedy awards and was compared to famous female comics before her—most frequently Lucille Ball. Cynthia McMullen's piece on Raven-Symoné's music career for the *Richmond Times Dispatch* begins, "You might call her the Debra Messing, the Lucille Ball of the teens and tweens set" ("This is Her" D-19). In an October 2005 article for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, David Hiltbrand ("So very" H01) writes: "Could [Raven-Symoné] be the next Lucy?" Symoné was also a recipient of a Gracie Allen Individual Achievement Award for her performances on *That's So Raven* in 2005. Raven-Symoné's excessive comic performances—unruliness—functioned in part to reinvigorate Disney Channel at a

precarious moment for the network, suffering the sudden departure of Duff and continued ratings wins by competitor Nickelodeon.

Although Raven-Symoné had a large and growing following of tween and teen fans and an established recording career[30] and was poised to expand her brand into fashion and licensing, she was of marginal importance within the pages of the July 2003 issue of *Vanity Fair* devoted to teen girl celebrities. She is featured on the cover, but beyond the fold. The fold-out cover presents a slew of posed and pink-clad celebrity teen girls, many of whom had become famous for their television and film roles. Amanda Bynes (*The Amanda Show*, Nickelodeon 1999-2002), Ashley Olsen and Mary-Kate Olsen (*Full House*, ABC 1987-1995), Mandy Moore (*The Princess Diaries*, Walt Disney Pictures 2001; *How to Deal*, Focus Features 2003; also famous for being signed to Epic Records at age 14), and Hilary Duff (*Lizzie McGuire*) are presented before the fold. The cover story headline reads: "It's Totally Raining Teens!" An asterisk after the phrase draws the reader's attention to a small-print caveat in cursive script at the bottom left of the cover, printed in metallic pink to match the magazine title and the girls' satiny pink apparel, accessories, and lip gloss. It reads: "This only looks like *Teen Vanity Fair*." White block letters running along the top edge of the magazine read: "NO WAY! NINE GIRL TEEN STARS ON THE COVER AND 19 MORE INSIDE? *WAY*!" In the bottom right corner, the number "20" is big and blue to emphasize the "20 PAGES OF THE HOTTEST TEEN AND TWEEN STARS" to be found within (emphasis in original).

[30] She had released two albums by then, *Here's to New Dreams* (1993) and *Undeniable* (1999), and was working on the *Cheetah Girls* and *That's So Raven* soundtracks (2004) and her third album *This Is My Time* (2004).

Illustration 1: *Vanity Fair* fold-out cover, July 2003. Source: Mark Seliger. Copyright: *Vanity Fair* 2003.

Beyond the fold, tucked inside, the photo spread continues with Alexis Bledel (*Gilmore Girls*, The WB, The CW 2000-2007), Evan Rachel Wood (*Once and Again*, ABC 1999-2002) Raven (as Raven-Symoné was known at the time), and Lindsay Lohan (*The Parent Trap*, Walt Disney Pictures 1998) surrounded by the titles of the issue's other, non-teen-focused stories. The cover uses stereotypical teen colloquialisms perhaps to strike a nostalgic or knowing chord with former teens (i.e., adults) or the parents of contemporary teens, as well as to attract the audience of teens and tweens who've bolstered these stars' careers. But the cover copy also specifies that this is not *Teen Vanity Fair*, while it aggressively sells images of "the hottest . . . girl teen stars" to its target demographic of affluent men and women of median age 42/35 years old (print/online versions) ("Condé Nast Media Kits").

In addition to her marginalization on the *Vanity Fair* cover, Symoné is featured minimally in the related article, which offers up teen celebrities' responses to a pop culture quiz that asks things like, "What's your favorite food, band, author, gadget, subject in school, and lip gloss?" and "What are your pet peeves and secret celebrity crushes?" (Wolcott 98). Few of Symoné's quiz responses are mentioned, and her career is not discussed.[31] Instead, Hilary Duff's and Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen's respective business ventures are foregrounded among a series of glossy celebrity photos and language that reveals the author's (if not the editor's or the imagined audience's) condescending, sexually-charged perspective on teen celebrity. The images include a pajama-clad pillow fight, a skirt-raising shopping-cart ride through the pink bubble bath aisle, and more than one bikini-clad romantic vignette involving girls and their (generally fully clothed) male celebrity counterparts. The single, full-page photo of Symoné is somewhat less revealing than the photos of other celebrity girls in that it does not show her legs or hips or feature a plunging neckline or bare shoulders. Pictured from the waist up, standing and facing the camera, clutching a white faux fur collar, lips parted slightly, Symoné is one of just two (out of 18) girls without bared midriff, legs, and/or shoulders in this issue—the other being Emma Watson of *Harry Potter* fame.[32] The images are offset by a five-page article, which begins with phrases such as "the nubile capitol of America" and "hormonal cyclotron," and ends with speculation that "A few sexy dishes,

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[31] The issue was published a few weeks before the premiere of *The Cheetah Girls* (August 5, 2003, Disney Channel).

[32] While Symoné is the only non-White girl on the issue's cover, the interior photo spread also features Solange Knowles and Kyla Pratt who are African American, Christina Milian whose parents are Cuban and African American, and Alexa Vega who is of Columbian and European descent.

stuck in a career pause, will let their bra straps slide for *Maxim* or *FHM* next to pull-quotes that leer, 'Two tequilas and I'm any man's munchies'" (Wolcott 157). Hypersexual and violently objectifying discourse characterizes this wannabe teen issue of *Vanity Fair*, marginalizing and dehumanizing the mostly White and female youth within the pages, and perhaps also alienating a potential youth audience.

At the time of publication, Symoné was already filming the second season of *That's So Raven*, and the first season had been on air since January. Her cover presence after the fold may be an acknowledgement of her success and popularity, though it may also indicate the inability or unwillingness of *Vanity Fair* staff to envision her as a central figure in this construction of a sexualized new celebrity girl regime, which is overwhelmingly thin (while Symoné characterizes herself as "thick" and not a size two like other celebrities) and White and whose exemplars have been notoriously fetishized in the pornography industry. If this *Vanity Fair* issue aims to draw in its usual readership by focusing on the teen stars most familiar to adult readers and most brand- or business-savvy—those with "bankable power"—it follows that Raven should be among them. But the fair-skinned Olsen twins and Duff, who are foregrounded there, are also those who embody the racially biased Western conventions of beauty perpetuated by *Vanity Fair* and most other U.S. commercial media outlets. And, more often than not, the public visibility and privilege available to those who fit that bill become technologies for strengthening celebrity brands.

As an "unruly" celebrity girl, however, Symoné may have access to the technologies of White privilege. Kathleen Rowe Karlyn describes the trope of the unruly woman as follows:

> Her body is excessive or fat . . . her speech is excessive . . . she makes jokes . . . she may be androgynous or hermaphroditic, drawing attention to the social construction of gender . . . she may be old or a masculinized crone . . . her behavior is associated with looseness . . . but her sexuality is less narrowly and negatively defined than is that of the femme fatale . . . she is associated with dirt, liminality (thresholds, borders, or margins), and taboo . . .. (*The Unruly Woman* 31)

This unruliness factors into both Raven-Symoné's star image as well as into her role on *That's So Raven*. Her body size and color are excessive in comparison to other girl stars; her speech is excessive both in what it reveals and what it does not; she is constructed in popular press as alternately asexual and queer; and she is construed simultaneously as a girl and a woman and as neither, making her a liminal figure. Raven-Symoné's refusal to conform to conventions of celebrity culture—in addition to her Blackness, her unruliness as a performer, and her relative "thickness"—continues to relegate her to the margins of mainstream popular discourse.

As demonstrated by the above *Vanity Fair* coverage, Raven-Symoné generated relatively little mainstream publicity in her adolescent years compared to her thinner, White Disney Channel counterparts, including in popular girls' and teen magazines like *Seventeen*, *Teen Vogue*, *Cosmo Girl*, and *Elle Girl*, all of which were in print during her Disney Channel fame and none of which featured her on the cover.[33] But Symoné has

[33] Symoné was featured on the October 2004 cover of *GL* (*Girl's Life* magazine) and on the Fall 2005 cover of *Teen*, as well as in brief interviews on the Seventeen.com blog. But her Disney counterparts, Cyrus

built into her star image a kind of subversive disdain for celebrity culture by refusing to address her personal life, avoiding paparazzi, and by continuously commenting on the body maintenance necessary to "appear" as Raven and the work she does to diversify her career while attempting to use her fame to help others. She continues to be constructed in popular press as both girl and woman, in that she is consistently referred to in relation to her *Cosby Show*, *That's So Raven*, and *Tinker Bell* roles, as a girl, while also being figured as fully grown out of those roles as early as in 2003, when she was just beginning her tenure on Disney Channel at sixteen. Her Blackness and her body may override her girl-ness to some degree. Her curvaceous body distinguishes her from her slim-hipped and small-breasted tween and teen counterparts; her Blackness can code her as more masculine than White stars; and her avoidance of sexual roles and publicity frame her as asexual, rather than hypersexual. In Collins' terms, Symoné might be understood as traversing the terrain of a young, celebrity version of the modern "Black lady," actively avoiding sexualization to sustain her career (138). Rather than having "rejected the unbridaled 'freaky' sexuality now attributed primarily to working-class Black women," however, Symoné remains asexual, or perhaps pre-sexual, in public discourse (Collins 139), her girlhood precluding her from accessing sexuality. Journalists and popular culture commentators rarely describe Symoné as having made a transition out of girlhood or away from her wholesome Disney role. Instead they envision her as already both girl

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and Gomez (and others), have been featured in those as well as in *Teen Vogue*, *Seventeen*, and *Cosmo Girl*, sometimes in multiple issues. As I will discuss a bit later, Symoné has been featured in multiple issues of the popular African-American-targeted *JET* (September 1989, April 2008, June 2011) throughout her career, and since 2011 in *heed*, *Kontrol*, and *Ebony*, which are also marketed primarily to consumers of color.

and woman even early in her tween-girl focused Disney Channel role.

Almost every mention of Raven-Symoné during the early to mid-aughts associates her also with her earliest role as three-year-old Olivia on *The Cosby Show*. A 2003 *Jet* cover story headline reads: "Cute *Cosby* Kid Turns Sassy TV Starlet at 17" and reveals Symoné's conflicted position as "not the girl from *The Cosby Show*" (qtd. in "Cute *Cosby* Kid" 60). But, "then again. I'm not a woman and sexy. That's not me. I'm not going to be somebody else. I'm just a teenager trying to do her thing" (qtd. in "Cute *Cosby* Kid" 60). Here, Symoné adopts the rhetoric of authenticity, of being true to one's self as a way to explain her perceived difference from other teen girl stars. She is "not a girl, but not yet a woman," as the Britney Spears song relates, but these statements may construct her as neither and both simultaneously. While Disney Channel talent since are repeatedly invoked in relation to other Disney performers (Miley Cyrus has been compared to Lindsay Lohan, Selena Gomez was called Miley Cyrus's replacement in 2010, and Zendaya has been referred to as "the next Selena"), Raven-Symoné has generally been considered as a singular force, perhaps irreplaceable, but also constrained by her identity as one of few Black stars on Disney Channel. And she is perpetually referenced as a former child star, as a "*Cosby* cutie" (McMullen "Soooooo Raven" D-1).

In an interview for *The Hollywood Reporter* in 2006, when Symoné was twenty years old, she explained that, "Having been in the business so long, I'm fairly detached from all the hoopla. I know it could all end tomorrow. The more you wrap yourself up in the business and let it become your identity the harder you're going to fall" ("Upfront & Centered"). She makes a point of distinguishing between a showbiz identity and a,

perhaps more authentic, private identity. She has actively avoided exposing her personal life and relationships to publicity even before *That's So Raven* ended in 2007 and points out in interviews that her music has not been relationship-based as is so common in most popular genres (McMullen "This Is Her" D19). In response to questioning about whether or not boys are "backflipping" for her, Symoné once responded, "No actually. [Laughs.] They don't really come up to me that often . . . A tear is coming to my eye now; I don't even want to talk about it" (qtd. in Robertson). When asked similar questions about her—presumably heterosexual—personal life, in appearances on *The Wendy Williams Show*, Symoné comments on the fact that she does not get hit on by men, but that "ain't nothin' wrong with that" (2011), and she remains cagey about her relationship status saying, "you know I don't talk about this, but I will say that I am very happy with life" (2012). Symoné's relative silence regarding her romantic life defies the logics of celebrity self-branding that seem to require full disclosure. In this way she is "quiet" amidst the constant clamor of loud celebrity culture.

A *Newsweek* article, titled "Why not Raven?", questioned why Symoné appeared so infrequently in tabloids relative to so many of her famous White female contemporaries (Samuels). "Could it be—we're just taking a wild guess here—because Symoné is African-American, not even close to a size 2 and prefers sweats and T shirts to Dolce & Gabbana?" (Samuels 50). The author interviewed Bill Jones, a photographer for *Essence*, *Jet*, and *Ebony* magazines who revealed,

> [i]t's understood that African-American celebrities aren't the big deal their White counterparts are in magazines. Half of the celebrity photographers I know that aren't Black couldn't tell a Black celeb if it wasn't Will Smith or Halle Berry.

> They only know the obvious ones. And even then, there's not a whole lot of interest. (qtd. in Samuels 50)

Contradictory to her more recent desire for privacy, Symoné, herself, lamented the fact that so few paparazzi appeared at her nineteenth birthday party. "I was dressed up and ready to party and not one flash went off . . . they don't even know who I am" (qtd. in Samuels 50). Regardless of the humor or relief to be found in Symoné's other statements, it is clear that publicity and the paparazzi that perpetuate it are viewed as a necessary evil in the production and maintenance of contemporary U.S. media celebrity. Those who labor to keep their private lives private may end up sacrificing the spotlight. Therein lies the rub of the public/private tensions of celebrity and stardom explored by Dyer and Meyers, among other scholars, and discussed further in Chapters one and four of this dissertation. Significant here is the suggestion that Raven-Symoné's body is what keeps her out of the limelight.

Symoné's "thickness," as she calls it, varies throughout her career to the point that she nearly disavows it for a moment in a 2011 interview with Wendy Williams, who refers to her as "skinny." Her weight has fluctuated over the years, prompting commentary and discussion from Symoné as well as journalists, fans, and critics. Symoné's light skin-tone might allow her to pass as "ethnically ambiguous," to use Beltrán's term. But her hair and her regimented care and styling of it, which she frequently discusses in interviews, help to code her as Black in the face of limited publicity about her mixed African American and American Indian heritage. Valdivia argues that "hybrid and ambiguous Latina girls simultaneously expand the ethnic register and introduce Latinidad while potentially replacing other less malleable ethnicities"

("This Tween Bridge" 106). Her argument is relevant to this case study Raven-Symoné because it suggests the usefulness of "passing" as ethnically ambiguous in popular media culture, which continues to marginalize Blackness. Valdivia finds that mixed race representation increasingly "replaces or displaces blackness from the mainstream" ("This Tween Bridge" 106). Yet Symoné is quite consistently identified—in her interviews and acting roles—as unambiguously Black. While constant commentary about the lives of Selena Gomez and Miley Cyrus makes it hard to imagine how any celebrity could control whether or not she shows up on the proverbial celebrity gossip "radar," it is not my project to explore the reasons for this discrepancy. Suffice it to say that mainstream celebrity culture overwhelmingly privileges representations of Whiteness, which has meant that the majority of Black celebrities are featured more frequently in media outlets owned by and/or targeting African Americans. Of the limited number of available comprehensive interviews with Raven-Symoné, the majority are published in *Jet*, *Ebony*, and other magazines that cater to African-American readerships, and the majority of her televised interviews and appearances have occurred on BET (Black Entertainment Television) and on talk shows such as *The Wendy Williams Show* (Fox, BET 2008-present), *The Mo'nique Show* (BET 2009-2011), and *The View* (ABC 1997-present), which feature African-American hosts.

Controversy that erupted in celebrity gossip publications in 2012 regarding Raven-Symoné's sexuality has revealed increased public interest in her romantic life, positioning her as having matured to sexuality, as well as in need of public scrutiny and at risk of being "unmapped" within normative postfeminist temporality, to use Diane

Negra's term, and therefore potentially "queer." To the degree that Symoné is able to control public knowledge of her personal life, she presents herself as a very private person and claims her sexuality is nobody's business but her own and that of the person she is with (Ravitz). While entertainment news sources, tabloids, and blogs repeatedly raise the question of her queerness and "out" her as a lesbian, she continues to deny public access to her romantic life. In this way she may limit her relevance to celebrity gossip publications, blogs, fans, and commentators devoted to exposing celebrity relationships and, perhaps especially, non-normative beliefs and behaviors. She thus attempts to avoid public knowledge of her lifecycle milestones, while the question of her sexuality removes her from the heteronormative timeline, which complicates the girl-to-woman normative trajectory. Rather than use the publicity to target a queer or lesbian audience or to expand her "outing" into a media event by giving in-depth personal interviews, Symoné reiterates her perspective on celebrity-obsessed culture and allows the "question" to remain. Her attitude toward publicity contradicts the logics of the industry of media celebrity, which thrives on the exploitation of private lives lived in public.

But Symoné's is also a practiced evasive strategy that can work to minimize tabloid sensationalism and protect her from being further marginalized. Such strategies may seem necessary for Black celebrities interested in controlling their sexualization—especially in the context of popular, heterosexist representations of Black sexuality that have historically aggravated homophobia, or the myth of homophobia, in African-American communities (Collins 179). It is, thus, easy to recognize Symoné's work as a

producer of her own celebrity image, rather than envisioning her simply as a product of the roles, recordings, and appearances that typically constitute the star. Raven-Symoné can be understood as "unruly," in Karlyn's terms, as a self-authored star (Karlyn *The Unruly Woman*). Ultimately, although she is continuously asked to present her personal life for public consumption, Symoné's cautious navigation of interviews and her steadfast investment in keeping her private life "private" function in tandem with her marginalized racial identity to minimize her appearance in mainstream press and tabloids while illustrating her efforts to expand her brand on her own terms. Karlyn defines the unruly woman as one who "creates disorder by dominating or trying to dominate men" and who is "above all a figure of ambivalence" (*The Unruly Woman* 31). Raven-Symoné takes a powerful stance in opposition to the White male-dominated commercial media industries and their overwhelmingly masculinist agendas by simultaneously calling attention to the artifice of femininity, Blackness, and celebrity and using media outlets as forums to do so.

Raven-Symoné and her Disney Channel character Raven Baxter might both be considered unruly according to Karlyn's description. In addition to Raven-Symoné's deliberate construction of a somewhat oppositional celebrity image,[34] her portrayals of the energetic, loyal, fiercely independent, and creative Raven Baxter in *That's So Raven* prove particularly useful for analyzing issues of gendered, youth-oriented racial and ethnic representation in relation to unruliness—especially within the Disney Channel

[34] For further discussion of Raven-Symoné's celebrity brand, see Chapter four.

brand, which is often considered a sanitizing, normalizing, and colonizing force in children's media.[35]

On *That's So Raven*, Raven Baxter is a teenager with psychic abilities that only her two best friends and her immediate family are aware of. In each episode she has a vision of the future and devises a scheme to "correct" the future before it occurs, usually employing extensive disguises and with hilarious consequences. She almost always fails to change the future and frequently gets caught in her manipulations. In one of the rare instances in which a Disney Channel sitcom deals directly with issues of race, Raven uses a uniquely unfeminine and unruly disguise in order to expose a racist shopping mall employee in the Season three episode titled "True Colors."[36] In "True Colors," Raven and her friends Chelsea (played by Anneliese van der Pol) and Eddie (Orlando Brown) try to capture a retail manager's racist remarks on video to be broadcast on the evening news. Raven, whose family is African-American in the show, and her best friend Chelsea, who is White, have applied to work in a trendy clothing store at the mall. Chelsea gets hired despite Raven's better qualifications. As Raven wonders why she did not get the job, she has a shocking vision in which the manager, Chloe, who is a White woman, admits that she "[doesn't] hire Black people." Raven is upset by this realization, and the usually upbeat soundtrack slows to emphasize the gravity of the situation. Raven's friends and family encourage her to fight back and expose the woman's racism. Whereas in many

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[35] As Giroux and Pollack argue, "By their very nature, predesigned imaginary worlds such as those proffered by Disney do not leave much room for children to use their own imaginations" (64-65).
[36] This episode aired on February 4, 2005 and was a rare episode written by Raven-Symoné's father and manager, Christopher Pearman.

other episodes, Raven misconstrues the events and comments that constitute her premonitions and sometimes even makes situations worse with her schemes, here, Chloe's comments are impossible to misconstrue—the context makes little difference. In the end, the moment captured on video is identical to Raven's vision—she knows racism when she sees it, and perhaps more importantly, the audience is never asked to sympathize with the racist woman, let alone consider her perspective as one result of a much larger, institutional racial bias. The episode locates racism in the face of one White woman, pictured in a shallow-focus, wide-angle close-up that accentuates her forehead and casts unflattering shadows across her face as she reveals her racism in Raven's vision.

After the vision, Chelsea and Raven decide to confront Chloe at the store. their friend Eddie, who is also African-American, enlists the help of a local news anchor who instructs Chelsea how to wield the miniature video camera hidden in her hat. Raven, disguised as a balding, portly male executive, explains to Chloe that she is "Marvin C. Sweetback, General Manager"[37] from the corporate headquarters. Raven, as Sweetback, tells Chloe that she should be advertising a sale in honor of Black History Month and then questions her hiring policy, asking: "You do hire people of color, don't you?" Here

[37] The name she apparently makes up on the spot is reminiscent of the 1971 Melvin Van Peebles film, *Sweet Sweetback's Baadasssss Song*, in which a young Black boy is raised in a brothel and nicknamed "Sweet Sweetback" in reference to his sexual prowess. Perhaps the name is symbolic of the power and authority Raven Baxter wishes to bestow upon herself as Marvin. Perhaps she means to call to mind the militant anti-racist group, the Black Panther party, which figures in the film's narrative. According to David Claydon, writing for IMDB.com, the film was "a powerful and inflammatory attack on White America." The reference seems meant to appeal to adult audiences and perhaps especially to Black audience members more than to tweens who may be too young to have seen the film or to others who may be unaware of it.

she uses terminology widely accepted in the U.S., though as Dyer points out, the phrase "people of color" can divest Whiteness of its racial and ethnic significance (*White* 11). Thus, while Chloe represents racism in the show, race is firmly positioned as Blackness via references to Black History Month. Chloe shows Sweetback Raven's job application and pledges to hire her, but later reveals to Chelsea that she plans to throw out the application as soon as Sweetback is gone. Chelsea captures Chloe's admission of racial prejudice on camera, and the Baxter family, along with Eddie and Chelsea, watch the news anchor share the findings on the nightly news. In addition to the dialogue and use of the premonition as a narrative device in this episode, Raven's disguise is particularly interesting as it reveals the racial and gendered power relations prevalent in contemporary U.S. culture.

As I discuss in the second section of this chapter, Miley Stewart is made more White and feminine by her Hannah Montana disguise, as a corrective to the failures of Whiteness brought about by her specific version of Southern-ness, but here Raven Baxter is made more masculine and adult in order to police acts of racism and to reify Blackness *in general*. Since Raven would be easily recognized by Chloe, she must be in disguise. Since Chloe has authority in the store, Raven needs to disguise herself as someone in a position of power over Chloe—a person higher in the corporate hierarchy, an older, bigger man. And if Raven means to catch Chloe in an admission of prejudice, she may benefit from a disguise that allows her to speak with authority as a member of an oppressed group—someone who celebrates Black History Month and places value in hiring persons of color, for instance, and someone raised in a pre-postracial society. The

disguise is meant to transform Raven beyond recognition, and, of course, to be funny. Thus, Marvin C. Sweetback is born, complete with bald-cap with scruffy grey hair at the sides, plenty of make-up, glasses and a mustache and goatee to hide Raven's face, a grey suit and tie with padding on the shoulders and around the middle to hide her waistline, and a lowered, masculine speaking voice punctuated by guttural noises and throat-clearing.

Illustration 2: Raven as "Marvin C. Sweetback" in *That's So Raven*, Season three, Episode ten, "True Colors." Source: motion picture capture. Copyright: It's a Laugh Productions, Disney Channel 2005.

The transformation is impressive, and Raven is nearly unrecognizable until she speaks in her usual voice and poses for Chelsea, giddily putting her hands to her mouth, raising her shoulders, and running her hands up and down the front of her costume to call attention to the disguise. She moves like Raven moves, and she speaks in friendly, conspiratorial tones with her friend. Raven's disguise is a highlight of the episode, though ultimately she serves more as comic relief here than as the problem-solver. Instead, while

Raven exaggerates a version of Black masculinity, Chelsea captures Chloe's racist confessions, and the news anchor reveals them to the public. The news anchor reports that Chloe has been fired and that the company has issued a formal apology, but neither does the news program provide a visual of the apology, nor does it share the text audibly such that a discussion might be had regarding society's—or even just the company's—complicity in racist hiring practices. The problem of racism is simplified as a problem of individual racial prejudice against Blackness, solved by making the crime and the criminal publicly visible. The final assumption made here, then, is that society at large is *not* racist, but its citizens can and should—quite unproblematically—sit in judgment of individuals who are.

The appearance of other elaborate costumes previously in this episode may help prepare audiences for Raven's transformation. The episode's secondary plot revolves around Raven's younger brother, Cory (Kyle Massey), who struggles to understand the significance of Black History Month. Their father (played by Rondell Sheridan) reprimands Cory for not putting forth more effort on his Black History Month writing assignment. Cory falls asleep at his desk while typing and dreams of the historic figures he has learned about in school. His parents and friends, along with several non-recurring characters, all appear costumed as historically significant African-Americans. Cory's father appears, dressed to look like Frederick Douglass, and his mother (played by T'Keyah Crystal Keymáh) appears as Bessie Coleman, "the first woman, Black or White, to earn an international pilot's license." They go downstairs when they hear Scott Joplin (Raven's friend Eddie) playing ragtime piano, and Douglass explains that ragtime

spawned rock and hip-hop—Cory's favorite types of contemporary music. He goes on to discuss Gary Morgan, inventor of the modern traffic light and introduces Harriet Tubman, Jackie Robinson, Thurgood Marshall, Sojourner Truth, Madame CJ Walker, Althea Gibson, Marcus Garvey, Mary McCleod Bethune, and Jesse Owens, who enter the living room one by one. When Cory awakes from his dream, he is reinvigorated and immediately resumes typing, this time excited about what he has to say. While the costumes used in this sequence are less transformative than Raven's Sweetback costume, and though none of them trouble gender identifications in the ways Sweetback can, they remind audiences of the show's themes of performativity and masquerade via one of the program's primary conventions—the use of disguises. Further, rather than being reserved for the purposes of disguise, the costumes function in this episode also to bring history to life through the performances of Black bodies, to celebrate Black History Month, and as a disciplinary and pedagogical device to drive home the parents' repeated point that African-American history matters.

Although Raven's many disguises provide her (and other characters)[38] with a certain queer malleability that allows her to transcend the boundaries of her age, class, gender, femaleness, and on at least one occasion also her size,[39] she does not transcend her skin color—some of her characters even represent Black stereotypes. For instance, in the pilot episode, "Mother Dearest," Raven disguises herself as a stereotypical Black

[38] For example, in one episode, Raven's friend Eddie is forced to wear a woman's dress and then encounters his female doppelganger—a woman also played by Orlando Brown in drag.
[39] In a Season two episode, called "Country Cousins," Raven plays multiple characters, including a tiny baby girl meant to be one of her cousins. Oversized props make her look smaller than usual. Raven also portrays Cousin Delroy and Auntie Fay in this episode.

middle-aged mother—part "Mammy" trope and part pious "Black lady" trope, complete with exaggerated wide hips and oversized protruding breasts and booty, a greying wig, an embellished hat, and an alternately maternal, disciplinarian, and flirtatious attitude toward the people she encounters. Incidentally, although Raven means to play her mother here, the disguise in no way resembles Tanya Baxter (T'Keyah Crystal Keymáh), who dresses in more trendy and casual apparel and looks younger and more slender. Such portrayals may call to mind stereotypes of Blackness, but they also speak to the comedy of popular African-American performers and film producers—namely, Eddie Murphy and, more recently, Tyler Perry. Both Murphy and Perry have famously used extensive disguises and accented speech to portray an array of African-American characters, female and male, young and old in some of their most popular films.[40]

As the only African-American girl protagonist on Disney Channel at the time, Raven Baxter may bear the burden of representing the entirety of African-American girlhood in ways that appeal to a diverse audience, including older kids and parents/guardians. Rich Ross claims that when he was promoted from head of programming to President of Disney Channel, the network needed "kid-driven, family inclusive," live-action programming to attract the elusive tween audience (qtd. in Nordyke). And Raven's series exemplifies that strategy. For Raven, "It's a family show, not a kid's show. The adult characters are all strong and funny" (qtd. in Nordyke). Raven's disguises trouble her gender and age categorization, although they seldom seem

[40] Murphy portrays the entire Klump family in *The Nutty Professor* (Universal Pictures, 1996) and its sequel (2000), and Perry has produced a series of films in which he plays multiple characters, most notably the matriarch Madea (Lionsgate, 2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013), for example.

to critique representations of Blackness. Instead, Raven's characters offer space for a variety of identifications that also transcend the apparent African-American, tween focus of the show. Through intertextual references and appeals to contemporary ideas about Black popular culture, Raven can address White and non-White girls and their families, driving home the functions of Disney Channel as a multicultural—albeit often color-blind—family network.

Despite the show's majority Black cast and the clear focus on exposing racism and reifying Blackness in the "True Colors" episode, throughout this series Raven Baxter is rarely, if ever, envisioned as belonging to a Black community or engaging in a stereotypically Black cultural heritage. While Raven's experiences seem to owe more to her family's middle-class status and her experiments with gender performance, I argue here that these aspects are imbued with contemporary notions of Blackness just as they uphold color-blind racial formations. As a middle-class African-American family living in San Francisco, the Baxters exhibit the "respectability" required by society for them to evade being imagined as undesireable, poor, or working-class (Collins). In this sense, the family is aligned with values normalized throughout society and popular media culture as White middle-class values.

Many episodes emphasize Raven's interests in fashion, boys, and other aspects typical of normative middle-class teen girlhood, such as hanging out in her heavily accessorized bedroom, getting her own telephone line, avoiding her parents' wrath, performing well in school and in sports, and throwing parties. For instance, in the pilot episode Raven must keep her parents from discovering that she is in trouble at school in

order to retain possession of her new personal telephone. In the episode titled "Leave It to Diva," Raven tries to find a way to get out of joining her grandmother's social club, the White Glove Society. She wants to make her grandmother happy, but is visibly uncomfortable when she tries to curtsy wearing a tight, pale pink skirt suit, with scalloped edges and floral and lace embellishments, paired with ivory heels, a coordinated hat, and pearls. She says, "I don't feel comfortable in this. This is just not right." (Raven almost always wears brightly colored, flared, and embellished pants—often denim—with a matching jacket or blouse and boots.) When the ladies of the White Glove Society arrive, Raven's initial instinct is to greet them casually, as she might a new friend. She extends her hand, smiling and saying, "Hey, what's up? How ya'll . . .." But when they recoil, she quickly corrects herself, pulling her hands down to her sides to gently tug at her skirt so she can bend at the knees, stumbling over the gesture and the words to say, "Oh, I mean, um, charmed." The group has already begun to serve its function of making its newest member police and correct her appearance and behaviors to suit their version of normative, middle-class femininity.

The oppression (albeit humorous, as the laugh-track indicates) continues when Raven's grandmother leads the group in reciting the Society's oath: "I promise to always practice good manners, good grooming, and to uphold the standards of the White Glove Society." Raven does not know the oath and remains one step behind throughout it. At the end, she claps inappropriately when she should be following the ladies' lead as they make their White-gloved hands imitate silent, fluttering butterfly wings. The Society creates a stuffy atmosphere in which women and girls are expected to use "standard

American English," to "dress impeccably," and to "always [have] a dignified demeanor" (Collins). The formalities of the tea party and tailored suits, the confinement of Raven's body, the strict avoidance of slang, and the silence enforced by White gloves all reverberate with the austere femininity and upper-class-ness upon which Whiteness relies—even suggesting, perhaps, colonial Britishness. In this episode, then, Raven comes face-to-face with the expectations of middle-class femininity, via the trope of the dignified "Black lady" whose values align with stereotypical Whiteness. Still, Raven's discomfort with the rituals and expectations of the Society offer moments of levity, as well as opportunities for identifying with her as *not* a stereotypical "Black lady" and *not* comfortable with the disguise that hints at White oppression by silencing her colloquialisms, her clapping, and her comparably loud (colorful, as well as more casual and comfortable) fashion preferences.

Not only does Raven represent Black girlhood in gender-queer ways in "True Colors" as well as in several other episodes, but hers is, thus, also a decidedly middle-class experience. As such, the series may easily avoid some stereotypical or more "authentic" Black representations since, as Collins, Springer, and others have argued, those frequently rely instead upon a poor or working-class milieu. Yet the show still manages to traffic in stereotypes of Blackness, while also privileging a color-blind ideology in which racial and ethnic differences are rendered insignificant. Rather than being constructed as part of her Blackness, Raven's unruliness comes to light via her creativity with costumes, her disguises. Her disguises allow her to enact those Black stereoptypes, but they also help her subvert expectations of middle-class femininity. In

addition, just as Raven-Symoné's unruliness informs her star image, her unruliness as a performer becomes clear in her excessive and transformative comic portrayals of those well-disguised meta-fictional characters she embodies as a result of her role as the self-assured, jovial, sometimes girly Raven Baxter.

THE STRUGGLE FOR WHITENESS IN *HANNAH MONTANA* AND MILEY CYRUS' STRUGGLE FOR DIFFERENCE

While non-White girl characters and performers figure prominently in this chapter and the chapters that follow, discussions of race and postfeminism in popular media must also critique representations of Whiteness. In regards to the body, Dyer describes a sense of Whiteness "having to do with tightness, with self-control, self-consciousness, mind over body" (*White* 6). In addition, he sees Whiteness represented in specific ways, not necessarily through stereotypes, as Blackness has been, but instead via "narrative structural positions, rhetorical tropes and habits of perception" (*White* 12). While the following discussion posits that girl characters on *Hannah Montana* generate a kind of White ethnic difference, I also wish to keep in mind this caveat, that "the right not to conform, to be different and get away with it, is the right of the most privileged groups in society" (*White* 12). Ultimately, then, the ethnic differentiation in representations of Whiteness in this series and in Miley Cyrus' star image also reify and normalize White privilege. Analyses of Miley Cyrus and the girl characters on *Hannah Montana* bring to light some of the tensions between ideals of White femininity and the realities of differences in socioeconomic class status and regional identities, in particular.

Miley Cyrus the performer and characters Miley Stewart and Lilly Truscott each

have been constructed in relation to ideals of spectacular White femininity and may be construed as perpetually failing to achieve them. As I argue in the previous chapter, Lilly Truscott troubles femininity as an "alternative girl," and Miley Stewart represents "ordinary" girlhood as Hannah Montana's klutzy, brunette counterpart. Lilly is an avowed—albeit still overtly girly—tomboy throughout the series, and she also comes from a working-class family, which becomes a single-parent household and precipitates Lilly's moving in with the Stewarts in the show's third season. As demonstrated when Miley attempts to makeover Lilly "from skate chick to date chick," Lilly may become more feminine, more "classy" or sophisticated, and therefore Whiter by proximity to Hannah, but she can never displace Hannah. Miley Stewart, however, has attained her upper-middle class status and superstar fame as a result of performing the rich White feminine spectacle that is Hannah Montana. While Lilly is a foil for both Miley and Hannah, Miley's recurring difficulty throughout the series lies in the maintenance of difference between Hannah and herself. Ultimately, Miley and Lilly both lack the kind of feminine poise and posturing—and the level of visibility and performance—that defines Hannah as the ideal. While Lilly transgresses the boundaries between working-class and middle-class Whiteness, the Stewart family's regional identity as Southern "hillbillies" often structures performances of gender and class and race within the series. Further, this Southern-ness extends to (and from) Miley Cyrus' star image in ways that similarly trouble the discursive construction of her as a classed, raced, and gendered subject.

Before exploring Miley Cyrus' star image in relation to Whiteness and class, here, I would like to explore the ways in which Whiteness is represented by the Stewart family

on *Hannah Montana*. Miley Stewart's excessive comic performances and the otherness precipitated by the reification of Whiteness and femininity via her alter ego, Hannah Montana, may help to configure Stewart as another kind of unruly girl for the postfeminist/postrace era. Introducing youth to the critique offered by the unruly woman described previously in my analysis of Raven-Symoné and Raven Baxter, Karlyn later distinguishes between the unruly woman and the unruly girl in contemporary media culture. The unruly girl "evokes the tradition of female unruliness . . . Yet with her faith in romantic love and individual freedom, she also embodies the contradictions of postfeminism" (Karlyn *Unruly Girls* 2). The unruly girl's self-worth, then, is anchored simultaneously in heteronormative romance and male approval and also in individual achievement and the discourse of personal choice.

While this characterization of the unruly girl contradicts Raven Baxter's (and Raven-Symoné's) general lack of reliance on romance narratives and male approval, rendering the star and her character more accurately as unruly women than girls, Miley Cyrus and Hannah Montana clearly embody the White-privileging "contradictions of postfeminism." The unruly girl "dominates men" perhaps less so via bodily excesses or androgyny, as her older counterpart would, and more-so via her use of the feminine masquerade and her success at being a girl. In this case, Hannah can represent the excessive or emphasized femininity from which Miley takes her power. Both Miley Cyrus and Miley Stewart can be understood as unruly girls to the extent that each struggles to uphold ideals of White femininity by reproducing and performing the postfeminist girly-ness of Hannah Montana. Miley Stewart is unruly in somewhat

wholesome, "Disneyfied" ways relative to Miley Cyrus's public, sometimes scandalous, real-world transgressions. Stewart's girl-next-door relatability hails from her klutziness at school, her romantic anxieties, her contentious relationships with her brother and the mean girls, her friendships, and her Southern or "country" ways of speaking and behaving.

Miley Stewart's Southern roots are regularly referenced throughout the *Hannah Montana* series, through references to her home in Tennessee, quirky colloquialisms, and Southern accents, as well as with special guest stars with country music cache playing her visiting friends and family members. In the Season one episode titled "Good Golly, Miss Dolly," Miley's Godmother "Aunt Dolly" (played by Dolly Parton, Miley Cyrus' off-screen Godmother) "Dolly-sizes" the Stewart household and reveals the campy, excessive Southern White femininity that inspired Hannah Montana's blonde wig and feminine, often pink, always sparkling costumes. Here, I explore Aunt Dolly's role in this episode in order to illuminate the Southern, "White trash" connotations that help to define the Stewart family in the program, and the Cyrus family off-screen.

Appropriately enough, the episode primarily revolves around Miley Stewart's romantic feelings for a boy in her class, illustrating the contradictory logics of postfeminist discourse, which demand that girls "choose" of their own independent volition to seek male approval. Early in the episode, Miley daydreams about kissing her crush, television star and fellow student, Jake Ryan (played by Cody Linley). She imagines herself as a gutsy, quick-witted femme fatale and him as a film noir-inspired hard-boiled antihero with a soft spot for her. When her fantasy is interrupted, she

protests, "I'm over you, O.K.? Get on with ya' life!" As she walks away, Jake points out that her shoe is untied, and she trips and falls flat, punctuating the end of the sequence with physical humor. Later, Miley, dressed as Hannah, works with Robbie Ray in the recording studio, but cannot get her mind off Jake, though she tries. She resists the romantic lyrics of the song she is singing, saying, "there's more important things [than dreaming about boys] in life like world peace . . . and whales! . . . And not stupid boy whales—happy, independent girl whales!" Miley wants to be a "happy, independent girl," or at least to make sure Jake thinks she is one. The reference to whales, here, can be understood as a typical move to suggest social awareness in a most depoliticized way—Miley imagines whales as appropriately gendered, but not concerned with romantic entanglement, and certainly not differentiated by race, ethnicity, region, or class status.[41] Without hearing any of this, Aunt Dolly appears, and seems to know instinctually that Miley is frustrated over a boy. When Miley deflects, Aunt Dolly replies, "I am talkin' about my god-daughter crushin' over some boy harder than a monster truck drivin' over a little clown car." Aunt Dolly exhibits feminine intuition and wisdom in this brief scene. Though she is "othered" in particular ways throughout the episode, she is also an icon of country music success and Southern White femininity both within and beyond the show, as well as being a clear role model for Miley/Hannah. In the final moments of the episode, Aunt Dolly, wearing a bright pink dressing gown piled high with pink ruffles and feathers, administers facials for Miley, Jackson (Miley's older brother, played by

[41] The use of animals in such a scenario is common to Disney texts and Disney corporate logics. I discuss this further in Chapter 4.

Jason Earles), and Robbie Ray. Miley reveals that Dolly was the inspiration for Hannah Montana's look. Dolly's response, "Really? I thought I was missin' a wig," immediately calls attention to the definitive, and most artificial, connection between the two—their blonde wigs.

Aunt Dolly exudes class conscious, Southern White femininity, but not exactly the "highly mannered Whiteness that draws from popular rhetorics about the Old South" (McPherson 109-110). For Tara McPherson, "strategic and 'knowing' deployments of White trash sensibilities can function as simply another route by which Whites assert their 'ethnic' difference . . . ultimately reinforcing Whiteness" (McPherson 203). While Aunt Dolly upholds some ideals of femininity, her excessive manner and appearance, and her own comments, repeatedly point out the artifice and impossibility of White feminine perfection. In her signature voluminous blonde wig(s), spiked heels, heavy make-up, and skin-tight, bejeweled denim, she wields clever turns of phrase and a Tennessee drawl, referencing church pews, a possum, hillbillies, Nashville, and a monster truck, all within seconds of her entrance in this episode, creating a stereotypical image of Southern culture with a working-class, or "White trash," connotation. Newitz and Wray venture to define the category of "White trash" as "both an economic identity and something imaginary, or iconic" (171). Historically, the term "White trash" has been associated with poor Southerners who have migrated north to find work (Newitz and Wray). Its conflation of race and class distinctions is made even less visible when terms such as "hillbilly" or "redneck" are used interchangeably to refer to Robbie Ray, and, by extension, his family in this and other episodes. Though this branch of the Stewart family are by no means

working-class or poor, they hold onto a hillbilly identity as a connection to their home in Tennessee and the country music scene and to distinguish them from their Hollywood and Malibu milieus, to comic effect. White trash identity can also "[come] across simultaneously as a form of class consciousness and a campy, stylized set of consumer items or taste preferences" (Newitz and Wray 178). Here, Aunt Dolly represents both the campy, stylized Southern-ness of a country music performer and the unruliness of a woman who calls attention to the apparatus of femininity and class distinction.

The Dolly persona resonates here because it relies on a performance of "girly-ness" such that she performs "signs of vulnerability—the little-girl voice, the giggle, the nervous flounce—[making] their meaning problematic" (Frith 213). Hannah Montana's Aunt Dolly is a fictional character as part of the Stewart family, but Dolly Parton's persona exceeds the bounds of the narrative such that Aunt Dolly *is* Dolly Parton. With regard to Dolly Parton the star, Pamela Wilson argues that "[t]he Dolly persona *embodies* (there being no other word for it) excessive womanliness . . . and she makes no secret of the fact that the Dolly image is a façade she has created to market herself" (Wilson 100, italics in original). In comparison, Hannah Montana functions more as a somewhat anemic—polished, mannered, uncritical, privileged, and seemingly apolitical—disguise for Miley Stewart, rather than as an excessive, transgressive public persona mirroring Aunt Dolly. Yet, Parton's presence on the show critiques gender, class, and Whiteness, implicitly authorizing other characters, and perhaps also audience members, to do so, in ways that they rarely do in this series. For instance, Aunt Dolly feminizes everything and everyone in sight, and her feminine excess is welcomed in this girl-centric realm in which

Hannah Montana reigns. Aunt Dolly "Dolly-sizes" (to use Robbie Ray's term) both the Stewart home and the Stewart family. Even the musical interludes typically used for location changes are inflected, in this episode, with the sounds of banjos and fiddles, signifying her presence and her excess. Exhibiting emphasized femininity through consumer excess, she covers the living space in pink, potpourri, and flowers, and she nearly always wears pink, perhaps to signify that she belongs there—or that she controls that excessively, traditionally feminine environment. She replaces the family's bath products with volumizing shampoos, citrus fizzy bath balls, and aromatic scrubs made from apricots and peaches, suggestive of the South, against which Robbie Ray and Jackson initially protest—using "the one thing she can't take from us, our man stink." But ultimately they prefer Aunt Dolly's fruity and floral products over their "manly essence." Aunt Dolly is not just a character—she is a version of the Dolly Parton persona, embodied by Dolly Parton the person. Her femininity is intrinsically bound both to her working-class Southern identity and to Whiteness, which is idealized in blonde hair, Western beauty conventions, and class privilege. The Dolly persona thus troubles the intersections of class and race and gender by emphasizing certain aspects of idealized White femininity—blonde hair and Western beauty conventions—while critiquing them in relation to Southern, working-class White culture. Hannah Montana shares Dolly's emphasized femininity, but she also embraces class privilege and so does not necessarily "knowingly" deploy a "White trash" sensibility or her Southern hillbilly identity as a critique of dominant ideologies. Dolly's presence in this episode of *Hannah Montana* may, however, help to construct Hannah also as an excessive feminizing, "girlifying"

presence beyond the bounds of body and voice.

In other *Hannah Montana* episodes, Southern-ness is the primary method by which Miley Stewart differentiates herself, almost always also triggering the laugh track. While there are exceptions, the cast of characters on the show is overwhelmingly White. This overwhelming Whiteness, and the desire to differentiate oneself that accompanies it, are symptomatic of the history of commercial U.S. television, which "eliminated urban, ethnic working-class programs from the schedule" after 1958, allowing for the subsequent emergence of "ethnically neutral, middle-class situation comedies" (Lipsitz 103). Miley's friends, Lilly and Oliver, among other *Hannah Montana* characters, are constructed as normative, White subjects—peers who do not have Southern accents or modes of speaking and are not coded as having particular regional identities.[42] In contrast to Lilly's and Oliver's seeming lack of regional or cultural markers, Miley Stewart's favorite exclamatory phrase is "Sweet Niblets!" And the program often turns on her quirky one-liners like, "It was as easy as findin' a mullet at a trucker's convention," and "It's like walkin' barefoot through a field of cows after their mornin' sit down."

In the episode titled "Smells Like Teen Sellout," Miley appears, dressed as Hannah, in a commercial to promote her new fragrance. But when she smells it, she recalls a negative experience from a pie-eating contest in her childhood during which she vomited on the governor of Tennessee. Here, excesses of the body, in the form of a

[42] There are exceptions to this of course. The recurring character of Rico Suave (played by Moisés Arias) is frequently stereotyped as the show's passionate, "fiery Latino," for example. And, in the same episode in which Miley "Hannahfies" Lilly, Jackson befriends a new kid in school, named Thor, who has a thick Midwestern accent, wears what looks like a Green Bay Packers jersey, is overly polite, and offers Jackson a cake made with "13 pounds of Minnesota cream cheese."

strong odor, competitive eating, and vomiting, work against Miley's Whiteness and femininity, constructing her instead as unruly, transgressive, and even abject. When the director of the shoot bypasses her and refers to the perfume as "her gorgeous little star," Hannah quips, "What am I, a plate o' grits?" The line immediately calls attention to her Southern-ness, and the director likewise reveals that her response to working with Hannah Montana, stated in a disingenuous and haughty tone, was "Yee-haw." She goes on to refer to Robbie Ray as Hannah's "handsome, cowboy Daddy." Later, Miley again references her Southern roots, saying, "Now, I smell worse than Uncle Earl after he was drillin' for oil and hit that sewage pipe." Lilly reminds Miley, in her articulate and decidedly non-Southern way of speaking, that she "[doesn't] ever want to meet Uncle Earl." Robbie Ray then adds an aspect of the carnivalesque to this tableau of their heritage, telling Lilly that Aunt Max is the one she should not want to meet: "talk about yer bearded lady." These are just a few among many examples of the ways in which Miley Stewart, and her family, simultaneously identify with, are identified as, and may critique Southern culture as abject, unruly, and existing on the margins of Whiteness. In addition, Miley Cyrus' own Southern heritage and that of her once more famous dad lends credibility and authenticity to her portrayal of Miley Stewart, while her celebrity and superstar status enhance her portrayals of Hannah Montana.

Certainly, the Hannah Montana guise has impacted Miley Cyrus' reception as a celebrity beyond the series and beyond her performances as Hannah, just as Raven Baxter's has for Raven-Symoné. As an iteration of the "can-do" girlhood of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Cyrus' performances of the "girl next door" in

Miley Stewart and the spectacular celebrity girl in Hannah Montana warrant exploration not only in relation to contemporary identity politics, but also in relation to the celebrity of Miley Cyrus. Below, I discuss transitional moments in Cyrus' music career, during which she is positioned in relation to her Disney Channel reputation and dominant discourses of idealized White girlhood in popular media and commentary. In the context of postfeminist discourse—which normalizes Whiteness to depoliticize female subjectivity, relies on the commodification and objectification of bodies, and attempts to divest feminist efforts and perspectives of their currency—the performances and media events discussed below might be understood as part of a postfeminist masquerade. Yet they also can represent strategic resistance to the ideals of White femininity.

Cyrus is regularly constructed by critics, journalists, gossip bloggers, and unhappy fans as "trashy" and "slutty," which, together with her Southern and country music roots, may keep her from maintaining the "wholesome" Disney image of feminine propriety and innocence. For example, gossip blogs, news, and tabloid headlines read: "Miley Cyrus looking White trash hot—braless" (Newsgab.com), "Miley Cyrus tarts up *Two and a Half Men*" (Hiltbrand), "Miley Cyrus: 'I Am Not A Slut!'" (Hater), and "Girls, 15 Call Miley Cyrus a Slut" (Tate). And, although perhaps less reputable sources, contributors to other heavily-trafficked sites such as UrbanDictionary.com and Deceiver.com define Cyrus as lacking talent, taste, and value—"overrated, redneck, slutty" and "with no talent" (Various). Comparing her to Taylor Momsen (of *Gossip Girl* and alternative rock band The Pretty Reckless), one Deceiver.com article details how the pair seems to be trying to "out-trash" and "out-slut" each other (Won't). Early in Cyrus'

career, as she began to branch out from *Hannah Montana* through pop music, she was regularly positioned as a likely predecessor to "fallen" Disney girl stars, Britney Spears and Lindsay Lohan, before her by journalists who called them "trailer-trash" and "out of control" and conflated class distinctions based on taste cultures, failed Whiteness, and the threat of young female sexuality into the simple labels of "trash" and "slut" (see, for example, Barnes AR1; Matthews; Peyser "TV teaches" 21, "Pop tart's" 27; Moore D3; "Trash talkin' Miley" L02). In one instance, Cyrus spoke out against cyber-bullying after having received death threats via Twitter. Tellingly, the threat most publicized in all the drama that ensued couples references to Cyrus' "White trash" style of dress with a death threat from a user with the handle @thecyrusslut. *Good Morning America*'s Linsey Davis paraphrased the threatening tweet as saying: "Cyrus dresses like White trash, is so [expletive] hideous, and urged her to die" (Davis).

Contradicting the common refrain that Cyrus had no style or class, however, Cyrus had been recognized three years previously, as a style icon for teen girls, earning the title, "S*eventeen*'s Style Star of 2009" (Rosenberg "Miley: 2009"). Likely unaware of Cyrus' style icon status among tween and teen girls, journalists and fashion critics writing for adult audiences later reported, "Disney princess Miley Cyrus hasn't exactly been fashion It Girl material" until she chose an "unexpectedly chic" gown for the 2012 People's Choice Awards (Moore D3; Misener). Cyrus' stylist revealed in an interview that she regularly had difficulty convincing designers to dress Cyrus, presumably because of their own concerns about branding and due to her negative publicity and her White trash image. The stylist instead went to London to enlist a relative new-comer for this

event. “For the first time, she came across as less of a hard-partying, trash-talking, peace sign-flashing teen, and more as a sophisticated, well-dressed, refined young woman” (Moore “Called on” D3). Here, Cyrus becomes the site of an image makeover—from unsophisticated, poorly-dressed, rough-around-the-edges youth, into a “refined young woman.” Interestingly enough, Cyrus’ previous style icon status in *Seventeen* reportedly had more to do with her penchant for bargain shopping and thrift-store hunts for one-of-a-kind items than with her ability to score designer gowns. Cyrus revealed in her *Seventeen* “Style Star” interview that “[i]t’s more fun to be able to say that something cost two dollars instead of $200” (Rosenberg “Miley: 2009”). Either in spite of or, perhaps, because of the poor or working-class connotations of her thrifted vintage style star status among teens and tweens, Cyrus remained, in the eyes of entertainment trades and celebrity gossip publications, White—but not White enough.

Even within European Whiteness there exist ethnic hierarchies. Modeled on those hierarchies, then, Northern U.S. identities may more closely resemble idealized Whiteness, while Southern-ness is left wanting. Cyrus is Southern, and, therefore, also *not* Northern—not the global ideal. Cyrus’ unsophisticated Southern-ness creates a barrier to the idealized Northern European, Aryan femininity represented most iconically, for instance, by Disney’s Princess Cinderella (Bell “Somatexts”). Much of the panic over whether or not Cyrus is or can be a positive role model for younger girls, then, stems from the tensions produced between normative discourses of Northern White, middle-class, heterosexual girlhood, her performances of a Disney Channel “girl next door” and of spectacular girlhood, and the public-ness of her lived experiences, which are non-

linear, contradictory, and sexual as well as being sexualized (which I will explore further below). As such, in her Southern-ness and in her "trashiness" Miley Cyrus can be understood as an unruly girl, revealed in and disciplined by the moral panics which structure her visibility and construct her as an example of "failing" White girlhood.

Having become extraordinarily famous in adolescence on Disney Channel, Miley Cyrus' so-called "transition" from "girl" to "woman," from Disney's kid-friendly fare to sexually suggestive and sexualized performances, occurred very publically and was constructed both as a series of tactical career moves and as a series of scandalous, naive missteps. By 2009, Cyrus had taken on multiple entrepreneurial ventures to diversify her celebrity brand. She had written and performed over 100 songs and partnered with fashion designer Max Azria to work on a tween girl clothing line for Walmart. She had engaged with fans online in a variety of forums, worked with several charitable foundations and activist campaigns, and had written a best-selling memoir. These and other initiatives helped her generate a multi-million dollar empire and a loyal following of fans for her music tours, television show, and starring roles in *Bolt* (2008), *Hannah Montana: the Movie* (2009), and *The Last Song* (2010). In her seemingly inexhaustible efforts to diversify and explore the range of possibilities for a young celebrity, Cyrus embodied a certain type of empowered femininity. Cyrus' Whiteness, femininity, youth, and fame together allowed her to take up this position of "can-do" girlhood. As Harris argues,

> normative ideas about appropriate female adolescence that serve a wider social purpose have been simultaneously imposed on young women in an homogenizing

> fashion . . . such that the girlhoods of White, middle-class young women have been generalized out into assumptions about all girlhoods. (*Future* 192)

While Cyrus is a celebrity girl, rather than the middle-class girl in Harris's argument, she exemplifies the new norm of celebrity aspirations for girls, while also performing middle- and upper-class girlhoods in television, pop music, and film (Hopkins).

The degree to which Cyrus has been afforded agency in her ascendancy (or downfall, depending on your perspective) is striking, though references to the roles of her parents and her many "handlers" and producers also abound. And the repeated message from Miley and from those handlers is that she is a "good" (i.e., White and not too sexual) girl, as are, it is assumed, so many in her audience. Idealized femininity is inherently White, apolitical, and de-ethnicized—meaning, of Northern U.S. and/or unspecified European descent. For the most part, Cyrus is seen as a decider of her own fate, and her fame is presented as a matter of personal choice and opportunity, which is entirely in keeping with the neoliberal and postfeminist discourses inflecting U.S. girlhood in the early twenty-first century. Although "can-do" girlhood relies on the resources and opportunities offered by privileged Whiteness, those opportunities are often constructed in popular media as lucky breaks based on "good" choices made by individuals (for instance, in the form of Cyrus' discovery by Disney, as discussed in Chapter one). Print and online commentary surrounding the releases of two of Cyrus' albums, *Breakout* (2008, Hollywood Records) and *Can't Be Tamed* (2010, Hollywood Records), as well as controversy over certain live performances and official videos produced to promote songs from each album, reveal the public panic around how and

when Miley Cyrus, "role model to millions of girls," would choose to "transition" away from Disney, away from the *Hannah Montana* franchise, and, ostensibly, away from girlhood. As far as I can determine, the popular press reportage and audience commentary regarding *Breakout* and *Can't Be Tamed* do not call attention to the ways in which race and class status also factor into constructions of Cyrus and to idealized femininity, thereby contributing to widespread normalization of Whiteness as neither ethnic nor raced. But Cyrus' video for the song "Party in the USA," from her second non-Hannah Montana album *The Time of Our Lives* (2009, Hollywood Records), adds significantly to her construction as Southern and "White trash," as I will discuss below.

When Cyrus released *Breakout* it was referred to as her first album "without any connection to *Hannah Montana*,"[43] although it was produced by Disney's Hollywood Records—as would be her subsequent albums (Levine "Miley Cyrus"). The significance of such connections cannot be overstated since the various divisions and subsidiaries of the Disney Company both sustain and are in part sustained by such girl-driven franchises. As long as *Hannah Montana* remains a relevant property for Disney, Miley Cyrus' performances and products will be understood in relation to that franchise. And those performances and productions that feature her likeness, financed by and for Disney divisions, should be understood within the context of franchise development on the part of the conglomerate as well as the celebrity herself. *Breakout*'s reviewers at the *L.A. Times*, *DigitalSpy.com*, and *Entertainment Weekly* each expressed surprise that a 15-year-

[43] Cyrus had released a previous self-titled album, although it was still connected to the *Hannah Montana* franchise as part of the double-album, *Hannah Montana 2: Meet Miley Cyrus* (2007, Walt Disney, Hollywood Records).

old girl could produce such an album, complete with "a decent song that actually got played on the radio" (Levine "Miley Cyrus"). For one reviewer, the title suggests a "more grown-up" album and the possibility that Cyrus would "suddenly try to live up to [her raspy, middle-aged rocker chick's voice] with more provocative material" ("*Breakout* Review"). But the author reveals that parents can rest easy since Cyrus did "just the right amount of maturing with her last CD," and the new one is utterly "PG." "Our little girl isn't growing up. Phew" ("*Breakout* Review").

These reviews also demonstrate a need to qualify the lyrics as "amusingly age-appropriate" and "better than you'd expect," her vocals as lacking finesse, but "huskier and more womanly than her wholesome image would suggest," and the album as "not a masterpiece . . . but much stronger than any 15-year-old Disney Channel star should really be making," a "true-blue bummer for Disney"—relevant to a particularly limited age-group with "low expectations" ("*Breakout* Review"; Wood; Levine "Miley Cyrus"). As Lisa Lewis suggests in her study of fans of other female pop stars, Cyrus' youngest fans, "[adolescent girls], who are manipulated, regulated, scrutinized, and disempowered in everyday social interactions with parents and institutions," are represented (when they are mentioned at all) by popular critics as not necessarily worthy of their station as "participants in an industrial process [of fandom] in which even the powerful and moneyed can take an extremely big and public tumble" (Lewis 163). The successes of *Breakout* and some of its individual tracks are constructed as "surprising" because of Cyrus' age, gender, and Disney affiliation, when in fact these apparent constraints are the most significant factors contributing to the success of the album. Hints of disappointment

over *Breakout*'s *not* being an anthem to Cyrus' break from Disney or from childhood are tempered by pre-emptive references to the potential panic that would have erupted if *Breakout* had been determined an age-*in*appropriate attempt to represent Cyrus as too grown-up.

The album was released in the same year that Cyrus was forced to apologize publically for participating in the *Vanity Fair* photo-shoot described in Chapter one, in which she is pictured "wearing only a sheet" (Masters). The widely circulated image of Cyrus, addressing the camera, clutching a sheet, her back and shoulders bared, raised concern over Cyrus' power and appropriateness as a role model and cast a shadow over her subsequent appearances and performances. As an adolescent girl, Cyrus came under fire repeatedly from parent groups, loyal fans, trades, and tabloids that debated her appropriateness as a role model for tween (i.e., assumed to be pre-sexual or asexual) girls.

Illustration 3: The controversial image of Miley Cyrus in *Vanity Fair* June 2008, which also includes a quote from Cyrus that links her to and distinguishes her from "friends" Spears and Lohan, who are "struggling." Source: Annie Leibovitz. Copyright: *Vanity Fair* 2008.

When she performed one of Hollywood Records' quickest- and best-selling recorded singles, "Party in the USA," at Nickelodeon's 2009 Teen Choice Awards, tabloids, blogs, and news sources alike were quick to sensationalize and sexualize the performance, calling it a "pole dance." Cyrus' use of a pole to keep her balance, while she danced atop an ice cream cart, caused public out-cry after the August 9th broadcast. *Billboard* magazine online quoted one unnamed Disney executive, who attempted to distance the network from the performance stating, "Disney Channel won't be commenting on that performance, although parents can rest assured that all content presented on the Disney Channel is age-appropriate for kids 6-14—and consistent with

what our brand values are" (Herrera). Commentary regarding Cyrus' performance explained that the dance had provoked fear in parents, who worried that Cyrus had "inspired a new generation of pole dancers" (Essany). And few descriptions of the dance failed to mention Cyrus' costume, which reportedly featured high-heeled boots, exposed bra straps, and "micro short shorts" or "hot pants" (McKay). The "trashy" and "slutty" connotations of the "stripper pole," as some called it, and comparisons to Britney Spears' "sexually suggestive [dance] movements," in addition to the representation of Cyrus' costume as inappropriately revealing, allow for a sudden disavowal of Cyrus who "most parents loved" before this performance (McKay; Essany). Not only parents and critics, but tween girls as well found Cyrus' performance unnecessarily provocative (Jackson and Vares). Suddenly (or, again, considering the previous *Vanity Fair* photo panic), Miley Cyrus' discursive sexualization lead to the construction of her sexuality as exceeding the acceptable boundaries of idealized White girlhood. Consequently, Cyrus failed to uphold the middle-class values inherent to the White ideal.

The song, "Party in the USA," its accompanying video, and the television commercial advertising Cyrus' and Max Azria's fashion line for Walmart, which also used parts of the song, all work to position Cyrus as wholesome and all-American, while also pointing out her Southern difference and, in turn, augmenting her "White trash" image. The song was released just two days after the above performance was broadcast, which was followed by the August 31st release of the album (*The Time of Our Lives*) and the release of the official "Party in the USA" music video in late September. Chris Applebaum, director of the video, insisted that Cyrus came to him with the inspiration for

the video, which would represent "high-gloss, glamorous White trash" with references to her parents' courtship at a drive-in movie theater in Kentucky in the 1970s and the popular 1978 film *Grease* ("Miley Cyrus Party"). The first third of the video features repeated shots of Cyrus' colorfully tooled, well-worn leather cowboy boots, as a symbol of her Southern, country music roots. She sings about feeling out of place in Los Angeles: "It's definitely not a Nashville party/ cause all I see are stilettos/ I guess I never got the memo." Soon after she sings those lyrics, a giant American flag is unfurled over the drive-in screen as a new backdrop for her performance (previously, she sang in the bed of a parked pick-up truck), helping to identify her Nashville origins with American patriotism and nationalism. The final third of the video introduces a dark nighttime scene in which Cyrus stands on a swing, clutching its chains while her backup dancers climb an oversized jungle gym behind her. Throughout the video, Cyrus and the other female dancers—several of whom are light-skinned women of color with long, wavy hair—wear tank tops, Western boots, denim cut-off shorts, and studded black leather accessories, performing a choreographed mix of popular hip-hop and country and western dance moves. The video and the song both attracted critical acclaim and widespread popularity. Cyrus' proud allegiance to Southern styles of dress, speech, and identification in the video and lyrics romanticizes Southern culture, appealing to color-blind ideology in which open references to the history of racism endemic to the South (and the rest of the U.S.) and to representations of Southern Whiteness would be inappropriate and unwelcomed.

Cyrus' teen fashion line, "Miley Cyrus & Max Azria," provided an opportunity to publicize "Party in the U.S.A." and promote her diversified celebrity brand via affiliation with one of the nation's largest, most patriotic discount retail chains. The commercial presents images of Cyrus wearing several outfits, video-taping herself sitting on a couch, then dancing around the living room, playing an electric guitar in front of the television. Then she appears on television, and a graphic match transitions from her knocking on the glass to an image of her dancing outside the window of the house. The clothing featured in the commercial offers a mix of references to British culture and rock 'n' roll, if not punk rock style. Cyrus said at the time that she was inspired by "kind of an edgy UK style" (qtd. in Kraus). Seated on the couch, Cyrus sports faux leather leggings and a T-shirt with a large graphic of the British flag on it. Following her stint with the guitar, Cyrus faces the camera and shows off a pair of high-wasted shorts with suspenders and a T-shirt that reads: "Cheers" and upon which lies a British flag in the shape of a heart wearing a black bowler—Cyrus wears a black bowler too. The Miley Cyrus & Max Azria fashion line seems less about overt U.S. nationalism, then, and more about commodifying and feminizing icons of British culture, via the bowler and the flag, in an effort to express, perhaps, Cyrus' burgeoning punk rock edge.

Yet, the patriotic imagery of "Party in the USA" and the fashion line's affiliation with Walmart lend a U.S.-American nationalist vibe to the "Miley & Max" line, as Cyrus calls it (Kraus). Walmart, established in Arkansas in 1950, grew rapidly from the late 1960s forward, building around 900 stores by 1980 and expanding to a collection of over 4,000 stores throughout the country in 2009 ("Watch the Growth"). Walmart's political

contributions have historically supported conservative causes and political candidates in the U.S., and its public relations efforts typically foreground patriotism as a unifying force among consumers. The corporation has also come under fire for poor treatment of its workers and for its unethical sourcing of products—selling clothing produced in non-U.S. sweatshops, for instance—but it continues to promote patriotism. More recently one of its less politically conservative owners contributed to President Obama's re-election and has vowed to try to sell more items produced in the U.S. Jennifer Scanlon gave a lecture in 2005 in which she detailed Walmart's commodification of patriotism in the months after the 9/11 attacks. The corporation apparently expanded its red-white-and-blue in-store displays and linked founder Sam Walton with images of Uncle Sam ("Professor Flags"). In addition to its overt displays of patriotism via campaigns to "Support the Troops" during wars with Iraq and Afghanistan and efforts to sell products labeled "Made in USA," Walmart's Southern origins, its guarantee of the lowest prices on a vast range of mass-produced household items, apparel, and groceries, and its overwhelming presence in rural areas and small towns make it a bastion of the Southern "White trash" culture[44] from which Miley Cyrus is said to hail. While her performances of "Party in the USA" seem to solidify her status as less-than-White and not quite in possession of middle-class tastes or feminine propriety, the fires of moral panic would shift and intensify with the release of a music video promoting her next album, *Can't Be Tamed*.

[44] See, for example, the "People of Walmart" website, which features snarkily-captioned images of Walmart customers as they shop (www.peopleofwalmart.com).

The May 2010 release of the video for the title track of *Can't Be Tamed*, also mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, generated considerable media buzz. Fan sites, blogs, and national and international news sources commented on the "adult" connotations of this video's choreography, costumes, and lyrics and its apparent function to liberate Miley Cyrus from her decidedly more "tame" Disney Channel persona, Hannah Montana. Many viewed this as the definitive break that *Breakout* was not. They saw it as a move calculated by Cyrus, herself, and a break that could alienate her younger fans and be detrimental to her career.[45] Directed by Robert Hales,[46] the video for "Can't Be Tamed" foregrounds Cyrus, costumed as a rare, larger-than-life species of bird, complete with computer-generated black wings. The atmosphere and costumes are dark and ominous, while the narrative presents Cyrus as a threatening presence who breaks free of a massive cage to roam the halls of the museum in which she is being exhibited.

As Lindsay Hogan astutely points out in her review, the video is "part Lady Gaga meets *Night at the Museum* [feature film, Twentieth Century Fox 2006], part "Couple in the Cage" [performance art and cultural commentary, by Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco, produced as a video in 1993] meets Britney Spears' *Circus* [music video and pop album, Jive Records 20008]." The "Couple in the Cage" reference is particularly useful for getting at the historical and cultural significance of the image of a non-White body in a cage. In their performance, originally titled *Two Undiscovered Amerindians*

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[45] Evan Sawdy discusses previous Disney stars' (Hillary Duff, Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears, Jesse McCartney) loss of revenue and fan-base during similar transitions "towards a 'dirtier' persona" in his Popmatters.com review of the video.

[46] Hales has directed videos for Janet Jackson, Justin Timberlake, Britney Spears, and the Jonas Brothers, among other artists. His production company, Mothership, works directly with sister company Digital Domain for visual effects and post-production such as the digitally rendered wings in "Can't Be Tamed."

Visit the West, Gómez-Peña and Fusco traveled internationally from 1992 through 1994 performing as "authentic" Amerindians from a previously undiscovered Mexican island, exhibited together in a golden cage. Fusco describes the performance as "a creative investigation/interpretation of the history of representation of the so-called 'discovery' of America." Further, the image of a human in a cage must be considered in the context of slavery—and here, specifically, in the context of Black slavery in the U.S. Cyrus' cage can, therefore, symbolize her entrapment and otherness—her attempt to differentiate herself from idealized Whiteness.

The "Can't Be Tamed" video was also seen as an attempt to show off Cyrus' sophisticated (i.e., sexual, or at least "sexy") "edge,"[47] reflected in the brooding atmosphere, the animalistic and tribal look of the costumes and choreography, lyrics about breaking free, and a sense of aggression in the rhythm and tone of the song. These aspects of the video, music, and lyrics are expressions of sexual subjectivity that rely upon ambiguously ethnic connotations and vague colonialist rhetoric that eroticizes non-White bodies. Cyrus discusses having her ideas come to fruition in the video "all the way down to the color I wanted . . . the bodies to look like," saying that she didn't want them to look like normal bodies (Raz Public Relations). She wanted their faces and bodies to be certain colors, but didn't want them to be "too fishy," as in, wearing scales, or "weird" and "scary," as in, with bird feet (Raz Public Relations). Hales claims that he and Cyrus worked closely together to create the video and that Cyrus wanted "blacks and blues and

[47] Cyrus has spoken in interviews about how her fashion line can offer girls cute clothes "with an edge to them" as well as discussing her role in the film, *The Last Song*, as more "edgy" compared to her *Hannah Montana* roles (Rosenberg "Miley: 2009").

golds; I want it dark" (Raz Public Relations). And dark it is—especially in contrast to Cyrus' previously Disneyfied image, which was so reliant on luminosity, shine, and sparkle. Cyrus explained in an interview with Ryan Seacrest that she felt her fans who had grown up with her on the show would be able to relate to the message of the video, which is not meant to be just about herself or about trying to be sexy, but rather is about explaining the song, about "living the lyrics" (Haberman).

In the video, a middle-aged White man in a tuxedo welcomes a formally-dressed museum event crowd, announcing "in captivity for the first time ever, the rarest creature on earth, Avis Cyrus!" Anticipation mounts as the "creature, once thought to be extinct" unfurls herself inside an oversized birdcage and steps out of her giant nest of twisted vines and limbs. This rare species of bird is adorned in luminous black feathers, which, rather than transforming or disguising her conventionally attractive, female body, instead accentuate it. She wears what appears to be—all in black—a sleeveless, shimmering leotard tailored to reveal her legs and cleavage and augmented with a feathered collar, leather-like belt, ribbons and long feathered gloves on her arms, and dance shoes with knee-high leg coverings, also with ribbons or fringe dangling around her. Her hair is teased high, but left long and tangled in the back, and her makeup accentuates her eyes with black liner and smoky eye-shadow, a more excessive version of the popular trend at the time. If this video is her cry for recognition as a serious artist, as an adult, rather than

as "just a girl,"[48] if it is a marker of her transformation from a girl into a woman, as many have called it, then audiences should expect her to be daring in efforts to transform herself. But even the "bits of couture styling," applied by Hales and stylist Simone Harouche, which are meant to be cosmopolitan and daring, do not necessarily compel a reading of this video as a challenge to normative, hegemonic, White conventions of beauty (Raz Public Relations). Instead Cyrus' body is showcased, decorated with scant markers of imagined difference (feathers, digital wings, dramatic make-up) to enhance her sensuality and attractiveness within those conventions that privilege both Whiteness and exoticism, while giving her image some "edge," attempting to justify both her cage and her bid for liberation. The video represents not a process of transition from girl to woman, however, but both the fact of maturation having been achieved as well as the contradictory notion that Cyrus might be an asexual or pre-sexual girl *masquerading* as a sexual woman.

[48] On previous albums, especially in songs showcased on *Hannah Montana*, Cyrus sings verses about wanting to be viewed as "a real girl" and "a normal girl" and wanting to return home as an escape from celebrity. One of those songs is even titled, "Just a Girl."

Illustration 4: Miley Cyrus as "Avis Cyrus" in the "Can't Be Tamed" official music video. Source: motion picture capture. Copyright: Hollywood Records 2010.

The fetish of the larger-than-life cage and the spectacle of exhibition in this video mark Cyrus as both sexual and different. Here, Cyrus has the privilege of "choosing" to exoticize herself, imagining herself as an "other" species while also enjoying the social and economic gains that will result from this presentation of her young, White, feminine body for sexualization. According to Susan J. Douglas, "[y]oung women today have never experienced a media environment that didn't overexaggerate the centrality of sex and 'hotness' to everyday life," and Miley Cyrus has embodied "what it's like to pilot through the crosscurrents of prudery and pornography" (*Enlightened* 182). While Cyrus claims she does not want her video to be about sex, or about who can look the hottest,[49] she remains subject to the standards and ideals of attractiveness and the conventions of

[49] Interviewing her for *E!*, Ryan Seacrest mentions the politics and provocativeness of the video, and Cyrus responds saying, "the video isn't about being sexy, or about who can wear less clothes . . ." (Haberman).

performance, Whiteness, and femininity influencing contemporary representations of female bodies. Here, then, Cyrus fashions herself less a Southern country music star and more as a cosmopolitan pop star with a rocker's edge. For Gayle Wald,

> [g]iven that long-standing associations between women's sexual degradation and their performance or display are as old as women's participation in the popular music culture, we might well ask why White women rockers are subjected to interrogation—or, as is more likely of late, celebration—for acting "unladylike." ("One of" 154)

White young women rockers or pop stars continuously described as girls or tween idols, as Miley Cyrus has been, are particularly vulnerable to such policing for "unladylike" performance or display, since they must contend with the discourses of asexual or pre-sexual girlhood. Cyrus' efforts to display her body as exotically, ethnically "darker" and "different"—as perhaps more animal than human—as a way of sexualizing herself, illustrates how "White women's racial entitlement and their gender vulnerability go uneasily hand-in-hand" within the "'racial unconscious' of popular music cultures" (Wald "One of" 155, 153).

As a statement of Cyrus' independence, artistic vision, and sexual maturity, the "Can't Be Tamed" video employs a broadly defined, ethnically-inflected understanding of "difference" as a mechanism of celebrity re-branding and identity production. Cyrus' investment in this particular masquerade as a projection of her "true" self, rather than as a mask for it, may subvert McRobbie's conceptualization of the postfeminist masquerade, discussed in the previous chapter. Cyrus' age and gender identities position her as especially in need of such a technology for expressing her more authentic self, since, both as an adolescent and as a girl, she is constructed as in a state of becoming, self-discovery

being long-since theorized as the primary goal of adolescence (Hall *Adolescence*). Here, Cyrus performs this sexual and sexualized femininity as an expression of her privilege and power, rather than as a disguise for them. But her protestations that the video is "not about sex" reveal a postfeminist desire to depoliticize her image and discussions about the video by rejecting critiques of its representations of sexuality, race, or gender. And the apparently simultaneous efforts to present herself as a sophisticated, sexual being and pop superstar, while describing the performance as not about trying to look hot or perform sexuality, illuminate tensions not readily apparent in the concept of the postfeminist masquerade for adult women. Cyrus is caught up as a girl bound to fail in a culture obsessed with eroticizing innocence and shaming the eroticized. The video's brooding atmosphere, metaphoric use of the cage, and exotic and revealing costumes, not to mention the song's lyrics, may together signal the impending dangers of sexualization and the inevitable corruption of the sexually pure White ideal inherent to maturation and aggravated by public visibility. The surrounding media commentary about the video reveals the tensions that arise from such a representation, in which suddenly the girl is something different, something overtly sexual, yet still imbued with the hegemonic, White "girl-ness" so central to postfeminist constructions of femininity.

The refrain echoing throughout popular media after *Can't Be Tamed*'s release suggested that it was also the calculated nature of this move away from Cyrus' Disney wholesomeness that signaled a risky, if not detrimental, desire on her part to enter into adult discourse, to be imagined as both sexy and sexual at seventeen years old—as if she

had not been fetishized and sexualized already by this point, and often blamed for it.[50] On CBS News, Anthony Mason reported, "Something has happened to Hannah Montana . . . on her new album, out next week, Cyrus is auditioning again to graduate from teen idol to pop diva" (Mason). Cyrus and the popstar iteration of her Disney Channel character are easily conflated in Mason's commentary. While "something" has happened that has changed Hannah Montana, it is Miley Cyrus who has instigated the change—as an apparent bid for release from teen stardom (and, I would argue, from idealized White girlhood)—and is held responsible. The edited CBS footage includes commentary from one of Cyrus' thirteen-year-old fans and President and Chief Editor of HollywoodLife.com, Bonnie Fuller. The girl expresses shock at seeing the video, asking "Oh my God, what is she doing?" And Fuller's answer is pointedly focused on the brand logics surrounding Cyrus. Though she mentions the sexual tone of the video, and audiences are meant to assume that that is what has Cyrus' fans in an uproar, the report does not venture any deeper into the issue. Fuller explains that *Hannah Montana* is Disney's biggest franchise to date and that with this video, Cyrus is doing "everything she can to be the opposite of what her brand was. She's becoming highly sexual" (qtd. in Mason). Mason remarks, "with [the Annie Leibovitz] photos in *Vanity Fair* two years ago, Cyrus was already looking to break out." And finally, he presents Cyrus' own response to the controversy "with David Letterman last night, Cyrus said she's just

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[50] For example, one reporter suggested that Cyrus' "upskirt" photo scandal that lit up Perez Hilton's celebrity gossip blog just before *Can't Be Tamed*'s release may have been a marketing ploy, perhaps especially because the star did not seem bothered by it (Thomas).

growing up" (Mason). While Fuller's explanation oversimplifies the significance of the "Can't Be Tamed" video as brand strategy on the part of the individual, Mason complicates Cyrus' play to the sexual by attributing the previous *Vanity Fair* photos also to Cyrus as an earlier display of her sexuality and an effort to break from her Disney image. Rather than apologize for this new video display as she had for others, Cyrus explained in one interview that the song was never meant to be "a diss to Hannah . . . it's about the mold that everyone thinks you're supposed to fit . . . about being who you are" ("Miley Cyrus' Thoughts"). While she did not wish to reject the *Hannah Montana* franchise altogether—at that point it was bringing in an estimated $25 million annually for her (and hundreds of millions for Disney)—she identified with the themes and concept of the song and the video as suggestive of growing up, changing, and breaking free of social constraints. And she may as well be referring to those same expectations that have talk-show hosts, reporters, and other interviewers demanding that she repeatedly explain the video, the song, and her motives for pursuing them.

Finally, Cyrus' comment that *Can't Be Tamed* is just a part of her process of growing up reveals the extent to which discourses of "growing up" had become, at that moment, integral to growing her brand, whether or not she alone was responsible for choosing that rhetoric or for that shift in her branding. As we saw with Raven-Symoné, this rhetoric of growth and maturation is rampant in constructions of child stars—as perhaps it is for all publically visible children. Yet, when she began her *Hannah Montana* tenure at twelve, the slender White Cyrus—who would play a character that epitomized successful, spectacular (read: White, beautiful, entertaining) young femininity—was

much less likely to be constructed as anything but still and perpetually a girl. Often "growing up" discourse is applied to Disney stars in a derogatory manner, vilifying "failed" or "fallen" ones, such as Lindsay Lohan or Britney Spears. But Raven-Symoné was simultaneously discussed as having been already grown up when she *began* her work on Disney Channel. Identifying as a "thicky-thick" African-American teen, Raven-Symoné was already a "former child star" by the time she appeared on this network targeting tween audiences (Thompson). Cyrus, too, had begun her acting career before appearing on Disney Channel, though in a program not nearly as popular as *The Cosby Show* where Raven-Symoné came to fame. Still, I contend that Cyrus' status as White and feminine, however marginal or unruly she may be, allowed her to embody girlhood in ways that Raven-Symoné could not during a similar phase of her career. Instead as previously discussed, Raven-Symoné exceeds the boundaries of normative girlhood and femininity as a function of her racialization.

SELENA GOMEZ AND DISNEY'S LATINA-AMERICAN DREAM

Similar to Raven-Symoné's construction as always/already "grown-up," Selena Gomez also has been envisioned in popular media as "adult" in particular ways. Specifically, Gomez has been constructed as appropriately sexy and sophisticated for a young Latina in the spotlight. While Gomez has worked to construct herself as "not a woman yet," she simultaneously has embraced roles—both fictional and in everyday life—as a "true [angry] Latina" and a "bitch" (Aminosharei). Even after taking on sexually sophisticated and sexualized film roles, such as her bikini-clad stint in the recently released "R"-rated feature *Spring Breakers* (A24 and Annapurna Pictures 2013),

Gomez escaped nearly unscathed by public scrutiny or the kind of moral panics that have surrounded Miley Cyrus throughout her career. Instead, the role may have helped to legitimize Gomez as a serious (i.e., film) actor, thereby easing her transition from tween star to adult actor, and as I discuss in Chapter four as a force also in the realm of business. I argue below that Gomez's particular form of hybrid ethnicity—she is Italian-American and Mexican-American—has positioned her as uniquely able to represent certain middle-class ideals usually associated with White femininity while also embracing her Latina identity. In addition, her Latina-ness may allow her to be constructed as sexually mature without being discursively linked to "White trash" culture or failed girlhood femininity in the ways Cyrus has been. While Gomez's efforts to align herself with high fashion and middle- to upper-class taste cultures have also worked to secure her position outside the realms of "White trash" or working-class Latina cultures, her role as Alex Russo on Disney Channel's *Wizards of Waverly Place* has been instrumental in establishing her star image as a hybrid of de-ethnicized Whiteness and U.S.-American Latina-ness.

Distinct from the Southern Whiteness of Miley Stewart, from Hannah Montana's spectacular, idealized and de-ethnicized White femininity, and from Raven Baxter's middle-class Blackness, Alex Russo represents urban, mixed race and Latina-American girlhood on Disney Channel. In her study of *Wizards of Waverly Place*, Valdivia discusses the invisibility of the central family's Latinidad as a product of main character Alex's ethnic hybridity. Alex is positioned, in Valdivia's argument, "as the bridge between three cultures [her father's Italian heritage, her mother's Mexican heritage, and

her own contemporary ethnic ambiguity] in one attractive tween body" ("This Tween Bridge" 102).[51]

Alex's heritage as part Mexican-American (on her mother Theresa's side) and part Italian-American and Wizard (both on her father Jerry's side) is referenced a few times throughout *Wizards of Waverly Place*. The family lives in a sizeable apartment above the sandwich shop they own and operate, which is also a front for their Wizard's lair, ostensibly in the Waverly Place neighborhood of New York, though the city is rarely mentioned. Alex's mother (played by Maria Canals-Barrera) sometimes speaks in Spanish. Her father (played by David DeLuise) is obsessed with food, which, coupled with his hot temper[52] may be meant to mark his Italian-ness. In one instance, though, Alex points out that she is "half Mexican and half whatever he is," gesturing towards Jerry. She remarks on her father's apparent lack of ethnic specificity—so complex it defies description in comparison to her mother's clearly delineated Mexican-ness,

In an earlier episode, titled "I almost Drowned in a Chocolate Fountain," Alex's relationship to her Mexican identity is clearly established, foregrounded for a bit, and swiftly subsumed by her romantic interests, sibling rivalry, and the trouble that comes from her mischievous uses of magic. In that episode—third in the series—Alex fails a Spanish test at school and is excited to find out that her crush, Riley failed too because he has been "paying as much attention to me as I've been to him." For Alex, boys take

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[51] Here, Valdivia extends the metaphor of the bridge previously used to theorize the cultural function of the Latina body in the early intersectional feminist anthology edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*.

[52] Frequently throughout the series, Jerry gets frustrated with Alex, throws tantrums, and is unable to articulate his anger. Alex seems apprehensive about his anger, yet not enough to dissuade her from trying her tricks again.

precedence over grades and over her link to her ethnic heritage. While Alex repeatedly identifies as lazy and unconcerned with grades or extra-curricular activities throughout the series, she is resourceful, clever, and dedicated when she wants to be—usually when she is in trouble or taking revenge. She reveals to her best friend Harper (played by Jennifer Stone) that she works hard to fail Spanish like Riley, by showing up late so he notices her and by not bringing her textbook so that they have to share. Theresa, however, is very concerned with Alex's poor Spanish grade and blames herself. She tells Alex, "Your failing Spanish is all my fault . . . Here I am, a proud Latina, and I haven't been sharing your Mexican heritage with you . . . I should be speaking Spanish around the house, and we should be making our own tortillas." As if there are only two ways in which the pair could share their cultural heritage, Theresa immediately decides that making tortillas takes too much work and instead takes responsibility for improving Alex's poor Spanish grade. Jerry laughs at the idea of Alex learning a language in two days and says, "I've got some Spanish for ya': No way, José." Theresa rolls her eyes at him, but after attempting to help Alex learn a few Spanish words, she gives up, suggesting that Alex spend the summer with her grandmother, who "needs help with the chickens," implying, perhaps, that she raises chickens in her back yard thereby stereotyping Mexican culture as rural and/or poor. When Alex complains that she will miss her date with Riley if she does not pass the re-test, her mother is sympathetic rather than motivated to change the situation. "I know, honey. Maybe we can bake cookies." Theresa seems to easily lose interest both in educating Alex and in sharing her Latina pride, turning to the comforting, feminine, American domestic pursuit of baking cookies

instead.

Alex decides to use magic to cheat and gets herself a Mexican "pocket elf" who can tell her the answers to the test. When she opens her locker, he is perched on a stack of books, dressed like a stereotypical Mariachi, complete with a shiny, curly black wig and a mustache, holding a trumpet and a sombrero. He speaks with a Mexican accent and flirts with her repeatedly. Excessively diminutive, this character is a clearly exaggerated stereotype of Mexican culture. While normalizing Whiteness as not ethnic, the stereotype constructs Alex as also not exactly Mexican in her difference from her Mariachi "elf." As one of the first few episodes of the series, "I almost Drowned in a Chocolate Fountain" serves to establish Alex's central role in the show and also to suggest her hybrid ethnic identity, while never mentioning that her brothers also share that identity. The mother-daughter relationship, then, becomes the primary site for identifying shared ethnic heritage and cultural difference in this program. In a later episode, cultural and generational differences further complicate Alex and Theresa's relationship, locating ethnicity in the family-oriented coming-of-age tradition of the quinceañera and its associated feminized labors, including the affective labor required of the daughter in support of each of her parents as well as the consumerist beauty rituals that construct Latina girlhood as a middle-class aspiration.

While Alex repeatedly finds pleasure in a few typically feminine activities—usually shopping and usually instead of studying—she actively resists other aspects of traditional femininity. When her mother pressures her to participate in a quinceañera, Alex finds little to like about wearing the princess-inspired puffy pink gown, tiara, and

high heels required for this version of the traditional Mexican coming-of-age celebration. Although Alex resists the tradition as antiquated and excessively girly, Norma E. Cantú argues that the quinceañera itself "offers a cultural practice as a site of resistance to . . . hegemonic forces" (77). For Cantú, the celebration

> reaffirms cultural identity and signals the coming of age of a young member of the group; [it] signals the end of childhood and the beginning of adulthood for the individual honoree and her family . . .. [it] must exhibit traditional elements and adhere to a structure whose integrative elements continuously change and yet remain the same. (77)

When Alex finds her mother and her friend Harper—who is, as Valdivia says, "unambiguously White"—planning her quinceañera, she expresses confusion, saying "Oh my gosh, am I sick? What's a quincemano [sic]?" ("This Tween Bridge" 101). And after hearing what she will be wearing, Alex sighs, "I'm sorry, but everything after 'pink dress' was just yuck, yuck, yuck" and "[l]ook at all this stuff. It's all too girly and lame—no thanks." Alex does not appreciate the traditionally feminine "stuff" of the rituals, but rather than allowing the celebration to evolve into something better suited to Alex, her mother insists that these rituals remain intact, as she would have had them when she was a teenager. Valdivia's reading of this scene is very useful here, though her analysis risks ignoring the particular way in which Alex objects to her quinceañera. While Valdivia astutely points out that Alex "objects to the femininity of the ritual . . . rather than its Mexicanness," she neglects Alex's use of the term "girly," which connotes not just femininity, but youthful femininity, and her use of the able-ist slang term "lame," with which Alex can express her "coolness" (and her able-bodiedness) in opposition to young femininity ("This Tween Bridge" 101). Nearly the entire episode is haunted by the sense

that Alex fears lameness—alternately conveyed via threats of disease or physical disability, as well as via unpopularity, nerdiness, or boringness. And the feminine aspects of "becoming a woman" in this traditional Mexican way provoke corporeal reactions from Alex—demonstrated in her throaty "yuck, yuck, yuck" and her hostility toward the dress, discussed further below.

Harper presents her with a puffy bright pink dress with yellow flowers embroidered on the bodice and layers of cascading pink fabric for a skirt. She explains to Alex, "I've embraced traditional Mexican embroidery—the shawl will be overnighted from Oaxaca, Mexico," spitting her guttural pronunciation of "Oaxaca." Alex calls attention to Harper's pronunciation and mimics it, "it sounds like you're choking when you say *Oaxaca*." In Valdivia's assessment of this scene, "Alex replies that Harper sounds like she is expectorating when she says 'Oaxaca'" ("This Tween Bridge" 101). But Alex's use of the word "choking" here, rather than suggesting that Harper needs to clear her throat, connotes a much more morbid association with Mexico and the border-crossing to be done by the "authentically" Mexican embroidered shawl. Alex hears Harper "choking" on the name of the town and feigns disgust. Further, Alex has very specific and creative ideas about what she can do to improve the dress—ideas that also could connote aggression or hostility. Her solution is to "spill a little paint on it and rip it, and when I'm done it'll go great with these shoes," and she sets her multi-colored Converse-style sneaker on top of the dress to compare the colors. Harper protectively reclaims the dress, while Theresa explains that there is a ritual in which Alex will change her footwear from flat pink ballet-slippers into shiny pink, peep-toe high-heeled shoes—

purchased new for the occasion and pulled from a shopping bag. Rather than succumbing to the pressures of postfeminist feminine consumption and beauty conventions represented by the shiny new pink pump, Alex adapts: "maybe I can switch from these high-tops to even higher high-tops," gesturing towards her sneakers. But her mother insists, placing a pink veil on Alex's head. When Alex rejects the idea, Theresa gets angry. "It's not just your party it's *our* party." But Alex points out that, "it seems like it's mostly just about [her mom]." Valdivia explains that "Alex, whose full name—Alexandra Margarita Russo—is invoked in this episode as if to exemplify Alex's otherwise subtle Latinidad, is caught in the middle, trying to fulfill her mother's wish while being a tomboy in the contemporary world" ("This Tween Bridge" 101). While the ritual may symbolize the ending of Alex's childhood, she neither wishes to look "too girly," in this very traditional sense, nor to be considered a woman by identifying with her mother—she rejects the dress and heels as symbols both of traditional Latina girlhood and of its end, precipitating a mother-daughter conflict that must be resolved.

Illustration 5: Harper is disgusted by Alex's idea to pair her splattered red high-top sneakers with the delicate pink party dress in Season one, Episode 20, "Quinceañera." Source: motion picture capture. Copyright: It's a Laugh Productions, Disney Channel 2008.

Just as a rift is created between Alex and Theresa, Alex's grandmother (Magdelena, played by Belita Moreno), Theresa's mother, enters, wielding a bicycle tire and wearing reflective biking gear. She shouts at the crowd outside the sandwich shop, threatening that they will "eat spokes" if her bike gets scratched. She is brusque and energetic and loud, and she calls Alex "Lexi." She challenges Alex's brothers to wrestling matches and constantly cracks jokes in a role quite similar to her role as Benny Lopez on *The George Lopez Show* (ABC 2002-2007). In an effort to mend fences between Alex and Theresa, Alex's grandma tells her that when her mother was young, the family could not afford to celebrate her quinceañera. This admission elicits sympathy from Alex, while simultaneously securing Theresa's and perhaps Magdelena's aspirational longing for the rituals, the celebration, and the display of consumption

required in their plan for the party. But in the end, the party presents a rather anemic and nonspecific exhibition of the Mexican tradition.

Alex's solution to the party predicament is to use magic to switch bodies with her mother (as in Walt Disney Productions' 1976 feature, *Freaky Friday*, its 1995 television adaptation, and its 2003 film re-make) so that Theresa can enjoy the quinceañera she never had and so that Alex does not have to participate. The spell works, and Alex avoids the coming-of-age ritual, but only until it is time for the father-daughter dance, during which she is reunited with her pink-clad body, and her father effectively gives her permission to "become a woman." His expression of pride makes Alex cry, but when he calls attention to her tears she brings *him* to tears by mentioning the cost of the party. The scene ends with Jerry crouching so that he can rest his head on Alex's shoulder, while she holds him and laughs, denying her own potential for feminine sentimentality so that Jerry can play the child. The celebration is thus presented as perhaps passé, more significant to members of Theresa's generation, both in their youth and as a present-day site of longing and nostalgia. Further, illustrating the prescriptive gender expectations reproduced in this episode, Theresa gets to experience the tradition in a thoroughly feminized and opulent way that is meant to recuperate her poor childhood. And Alex gets to avoid much of it, without denying Jerry, or the audience, visions of Selena Gomez as Alex (and as Theresa) in the oversized, pink princess gown, heels, and tiara she dismisses as too girly for her, earlier in the episode.

In the presence of these signifiers of emphasized femininity and consumption, it is the lurking significance of other, subtle signifiers of Latinidad in this episode which

"[work] to flatten difference within Latinidad on U.S. television" (Valdivia "This Tween Bridge" 102). Valdivia describes a sea of nameless "multicultural looking people" who "blend into the wallpaper" and a dubious focus on learning to salsa dance for the party, though it is not a Mexican dance and the music played at the party is not necessarily salsa music. And this is the key, in Valdivia's argument, to locating difference with Alex, making her a bridge between three cultures, and making liminality and hybridity sites for identifying cultural difference at the risk of displacing representations of African-American cultures, in particular. Embodying a link between Whiteness and Latinidad and her own ethnic hybridity, Alex represents difference without being ethnically specific. I discuss the role of Selena Gomez and celebrity branding in relation to her performance of Alex below. But aside from being performed by Gomez, neither Alex's style of dress, nor her interests, nor her voice on the show connote cultural difference or Latinidad. In this way, the show can work to divest representations of difference of their specificity and to reify Whiteness via emphasized femininity, as well as through the privilege of "choosing" to oppose it by being "a rebellious yet 'normal' teen who likes video games and dresses as a rocker" (Valdivia "This Tween Bridge" 102). Thus, while *That's So Raven* no longer airs on Disney Channel and there has not been a majority-Black cast series produced to replace it, *Wizards of Waverly Place* appears to offer ambiguous ethnic diversity in its stead.

Represented within the context of postfeminist femininity, Alex is one example of the way in which Disney Channel's girl protagonists may be less career- or education-oriented than those capable young women and can-do girl subjects discussed by

McRobbie and Harris. In Harris' conceptualization, the "can-do" girl becomes a vessel for society's fears, anxieties, and hope for the future in contemporary neoliberal culture, while her opposite, the "at-risk girl," functions as a scapegoat for misaligned and oppressive social and economic systems (*Future*). Harris' view of twenty-first century girlhoods clearly aligns with theories of postfeminist culture, such that "girling" or "girlification" is not just a matter of infantilized womanhood or the feminization of culture, but relies on the recognition that girls have access to power in a culture that imbues them with so much potential and fortitude while it strives to exploit their consumption, visibility, and aspirations for fame (*Future*). Alex performs poorly in school and uses her magic to get out of doing all manner of work. Her family and friends refer to her as "the laziest girl on Earth." Unlike overachieving White and Asian girl characters before her (like Clarissa Darling of *Clarissa Explains It All*, Blossom Russo of *Blossom*, Sabrina of *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*, Shelby Woo of *The Mystery Files of Shelby Woo*, and, arguably, Miley/Hannah), Alex focuses her energies on avoiding punishments for her manipulations and tricks gone awry, all while looking stylish in creatively layered and accessorized outfits and coifed hair and make-up.

Alex can be understood as unruly in that she exceeds the boundaries of body and voice—by magically switching bodies and by signifying hybridity and acting as a sort of cultural bridge. Alex's (and Gomez's) "ability to occupy and shift between racial and ethnic categories ruptures dominant identity discourse," which historically has dictated that Whiteness, alone, conveys the right to "be different and get away with it" (Guzmán and Valdivia 313; Dyer *White* 12). In addition to the malleability provided by Alex's

ethnic hybridity, there are also queer potentialities within the series. For example, her younger brother, Max, is played by a girl for several episodes due to a magic trick gone awry. And Alex's characterization as less feminine than other girls might also create space for queer identifications. Yet Alex's frequent appeals to the postfeminist heterosexual contract and its prescribed gender expectations may instead preclude her from being understood as a queer character. Rather she may be understood as a postfeminist unruly girl heroine. Despite her lack of investment in school work, Alex's obsessions with boys and fashion—coded as evidence of her empowered, feminine independence—allow her to fulfill some expectations of postfeminist "can-do" girlhood as well as those of unruly girlhood, since she "evokes the tradition of female unruliness" while also exhibiting "faith in romantic love and individual freedom" (Karlyn *Unruly Girls* 2).

Still, Alex can work as an antihero in comparison to her contemporary Miley/Hannah's ever-expanding superstardom and spectacularization. What Alex apparently lacks in career enthusiasm and classroom acumen, she more than makes up for in sharp-wittedness and creative opportunism. Her cleverness and ability to manipulate people and situations convey her resistance to dominant institutions and systems, in contrast to McRobbie's capable girl, who works ambitiously toward career success while abiding (if not doubly embodying, in the case of Hannah), her role in the postfeminist sexual contract to maintain conventions of femininity (*The Aftermath*). Alex's operation outside the realm of established and accepted systems, perhaps following what Harris refers to as a "nonlinear trajectory," allows her a more immediate degree of autonomy

than Miley can have as Miley continuously fulfills her own (and everyone else's) demands for more of Hannah (*Future*). While Miley/Hannah may be envisioned as more powerful than Alex in those realms that apparently make girlhood more significant and therefore more threatening than ever—those of consumption, fame, and visibility—Alex may pose a different sort of threat to conventional masculinity when she uses unconventional methods to control her world and get what she wants.

Alex may represent a sort of nonthreatening resistant girlhood on Disney Channel, but the star of the show, Selena Gomez, presents a branded celebrity image beyond the network that seems to exude loyalty, concern for age-appropriateness, and a decided lack of unruliness in comparison to other Disney stars, such as Miley Cyrus and even Raven-Symoné. In an interview published in the July 2012 issue of *Elle* magazine, Gomez is asked to reflect on what it means to be the first Latina to lead a Disney Channel series. "Growing up," she says,

> [teen idols] were all blond, with light-colored eyes. I wanted to be that. I didn't realize how important it was to represent my background and my culture until parents of Latin descent started coming up to me. Then it clicked. I can represent a different generation and a different culture. (qtd. in Aminosharei 170)

Aside from revealing her own earlier internalized racism and desire to be one of those blonde, blue-eyed teen idols, Gomez now assumes a position as role model and representative for Latina/o youth.

By recalling for *Elle* readers the struggles of her childhood, Gomez can also illustrate how she and her mother parlayed hard work and talent across multiple media industries and spheres of business into spectacular social and financial capital as the

fulfillment of the so-called American dream. At one point she mentions, "I can remember about seven times when our car got stuck on the highway because we'd run out of gas money" (qtd. in Aminosharei 170). The article's author describes Gomez's childhood by explaining her mother's economic and social circumstances when Selena was young and by referencing where and how the two lived:

> Gomez grew up an only child in the suburban Texas town of Grand Prairie with her mother Amanda Dawn, who had Gomez at 16 and split with Gomez's father four years later . . .. A community theater actress, Dawn worked several jobs to shield her daughter from their sometimes gloomy family financials . . .. Still, her mother "saved up to take me to concerts. She took me to museums and aquariums to teach me about the world, about what's real." (Aminosharei 170)

From inauspicious beginnings, then, rose Gomez, with the help of her devoted mother, but due in large part also to Gomez's possession of the charisma and ethnicity sought after by Disney casting agents and producers. In origin stories that date back to the beginnings of the star system in classical Hollywood, a sheltered, small-town, unknown girl can start from "nothing" and be "discovered" by an agent or producer for a major studio who expertly recognizes her "raw talent" or "star quality." The head of Disney Channel's casting department, Judy Taylor claims, "She had raw talent and a real potential for comedy" (qtd. in Aminosharei 170). But she goes on to explain that Gomez also looks familiar to the country's growing Latina/o demographic. The *Elle* interviewer cites statistical findings to emphasize how quickly the demographic is growing and how lucrative it is for television networks to appeal to Latina/o audiences. Gomez also offers up an anecdote to relay her earliest inspiration to be a performer—at the age of five, seeing Jennifer Lopez play Tejano star Selena Quintanilla Perez (known simply as

Selena, also Gomez's namesake) in the biopic *Selena* (Warner Bros., 1997).[53] Gomez's Disney Channel role is thus recuperated as "personally rewarding" for the star, who wants to be as celebrated as Selena or Jennifer Lopez (or Jennifer Aniston, Britney Spears, or Hilary Duff whom she also mentions) and who wants to be a role model and site of identification for other young Latinas. So, although Gomez spent most of her childhood with her Italian-American mother in a Texas suburb and then in Los Angeles, it is now her Mexican heritage on her father's side, rather than her Whiteness or her mixed ethnicity, that supposedly distinguishes her.

For Dyer, "the general image of stardom can be seen as a version of the American Dream, organized around the themes of consumption, success, and ordinariness" (*Stars* 35). While much of the *Elle* article focuses on the potentially wild shifts Gomez has planned for her burgeoning film career, the author manages to construct her as also firmly grounded and ordinary. Gomez apparently retains "[idol Jennifer] Aniston's understated comic essence on camera—the everygirl hand-talking, the well-timed furrowed brows and double takes" (Aminosharei 170). But she remarks that she naturally also plays the "mean rich bitch" in *Monte Carlo* (2012), since her *Wizards of Waverly Place* character "is a bitch." Gomez seems to actively promote the idea of herself as capable of taking on the "rich bitch" role, which might be difficult for someone from her small-town, impoverished, and presumably disempowered background. She also seems to promote herself here as "edgy" in a slightly different way than Miley Cyrus has done. Whereas

[53] Deborah Paredez reveals how Selena's death in 1995 vaulted her into mainstream public view, generated performative communities in celebration of her life, and swiftly increased awareness of the growing Latina/o population throughout the U.S.

Cyrus represented herself as "edgy" in order to distinguish herself from the *Hannah Montana* franchise, Gomez instead sees bitchiness as a central feature of her Disney Channel character, Alex, who is selfish and manipulative and spoiled. It seems telling that Gomez does not refer to herself or Alex as a brat. Instead, for *Elle* readers, Gomez uses Alex's "bitchiness" to help her portray other characters and to portray herself as more sophisticated or mature than her Disney heritage might otherwise suggest.

Comments, mentioned in the *Elle* interview, from her *Spring Breakers* co-star, James Franco, present Gomez as a daring and dark actor who is "really going for it" (qtd. in Aminosharei 170). In *Spring Breakers*, Gomez plays Faith, one of four working-class teen girls longing to enjoy spring break like their more privileged peers. The other three rob a local diner to pay for their trip, and the whole group eventually falls in with a drug dealer, Alien (James Franco). In Peter Travers' review of the film for *Rolling Stone* (in which the four bikini-clad girls alone are pictured, but only Franco's name appears at the top of the page near the title), Faith is described as being "into Christian studies" and "the first one to take the bus home." Travers suggests viewers "may want to follow" her, to avoid the movie's bloody gun battle, but not before mentioning that "The promise of nudity and girl-on-girl action among Disney hotties . . . is just a porny tease." Still, the film is graphic and "dark" enough for Gomez to warn her young fans *not* to see it (Dibdin).

Illustration 6: *Spring Breakers* (A24 and Annapurna Pictures, 2013) co-stars (left to right), Rachel Korine, Selena Gomez, Ashley Benson, James Franco, and Vanessa Hudgens in a promotional still for the film. Source: Springbreakersfilm.com. Copyright: Annapurna Pictures 2013.

Interested, then, in creating a more sexually mature and film career-oriented celebrity image than her Disney persona, Gomez also reacts positively to "splatter-porn" director Eli Roth's advice to "[k]eep throwing [people] off," since, "[n]obody really knows the real you" (qtd. in Aminosharei 2012: 170). She might engage in the shifting masquerade that celebrity offers,[54] but I would argue that as a girl Gomez's star image can be constrained in ways that complicate the idea of the star as constituting an unending series of self-guided transformations. Gomez's star image may remain in flux, but it is bound by conventional discourses of girlhood that set up the sexual milestone of "the fixity of womanhood" as the singular, inevitable transformation for girls, as well as by discourses that may construe her as always/already more woman than child as a result

[54] For Sarah Gilligan and Lee Barron in their respective studies of other female stars who have diversified (namely Gwyneth Paltrow and Elizabeth Hurley), a star can exist, to use Gilligan's phrasing, "not as a single iconic image, but as a multiplicity of images, a ceaseless flow of self transformation and masquerade" (Gilligan 246; Barron 528).

of her non-White identity and ostensible sexual maturity (Driscoll *Girls* 47). Gomez's final comments in the *Elle* interview return readers to the notion of her ordinary girl-ness, in the process of "growing up," for whom "whether I take the right steps or the wrong steps, it'll be interesting—and scary," and whose mother "taught me to educate myself on the things I was scared of" (qtd. in Aminosharei 170). In the rhetoric of the American Dream myth, hard work and perseverance can rescue anyone from poverty, despite her gender, age, or racial or ethnic difference.

The aspirational tale of discovery repeated in celebrity interviews such as this one fashions stars like Gomez as subjects of Hollywood progress narratives in order to create points of identification for audiences and to generate lore and mythology to support the star image in order to more efficiently market the star and her transmedia franchise. Similar to Jackie Stacey's and Lisa Lewis's respective studies of girls' and women's emulation of stars, Sarah Projansky's forthcoming book includes a study of tween girl fans of Selena Gomez. Projansky demonstrates that some tween girls in the audience do feel compelled to emulate Selena Gomez—to look like her and to be famous. They connect the glamour and desire of the star to their own active fandom and even to career goals, rather than focusing only on the stars' body and visibility (Projansky *Spectacular*). As Dyer reveals, stars can be "authenticated" for audience identification both through their similarities to and also in opposition to their on-screen personae ("A Star"). Inasmuch as fans might identify with Gomez as Latina, celebrating her Mexican heritage allows Gomez to take advantage of living "in an age when Latinidad, the state and

process of being, becoming, and/or appearing Latina/o, is the 'It' ethnicity and style in contemporary U.S. mainstream culture" (Guzmán and Valdivia 307).

In the *Elle* article, Gomez identifies herself using the Latina spitfire stereotype, saying, "[my bodyguard] calls me a true Latina woman. I can go off" (qtd. in Aminosharei 167). Analyzing Latina images in popular U.S. film and television, Isabel Molina-Guzmán explores contemporary portrayals and subversions of "dominant mainstream stereotypes, in particular that of the Latina spitfire and self-sacrificing Latina mother" (147). She describes the spitfire as an "emotionally temperamental Latina who speaks Spanish at the angry drop of a hat" (Molina-Guzmán 93). Gomez uses this stereotype to secure her Latina identity, as well as to express her adulthood. For *Elle* readers, she becomes a "Latina woman," rather than a girl. Further, Gomez mentions her Mexican heritage in the interview, but prefers the commonly used broader term "Latina," through which she might more easily represent hybridity and desireable cosmopolitan ethnic ambiguity. Gomez's Latina-ness connects her to her mixed race character and audiences, while references to her "bitch" characters can simultaneously play on the Latina stereotype and also work to emphasize Gomez's reserved and well-mannered femininity as her "authentic" self in opposition to the stereotype. In this and other interviews, Gomez depicts herself coming to realize how her success not only relies on her supposed link to "ordinariness" but also upon those identifying factors of age, gender, ethnicity, and class—factors that represent her difference from the blonde, blue-eyed idols of her childhood or of previous generations. Valdivia's conceptualization of Gomez's character Alex Russo as representative of the hybrid Latina as a cultural bridge,

then, is useful here as well ("This Tween Bridge"). In addition to connecting Whiteness to difference via the Latina body, Gomez can also symbolize a bridge between notions of impoverished or "at-risk" non-White girlhoods and idealized "can-do" White girlhood in the context of Hollywood stardom and celebrity historically privileging White bodies.

As I explore in greater detail in the fourth chapter of this dissertation, Selena Gomez has navigated her Disney success a bit more deftly than Miley Cyrus and others before her seem to have done. Though certainly not immune to gossip about her body, romantic relationships, and choices of apparel, Gomez, like Raven-Symoné, has not suffered the on-going stream of tabloid scandals that Cyrus has—no images circulate of her with drug paraphernalia, making questionably racist gestures, showing off her bra or going without underwear, or cozying up to older men. There are several factors that may contribute to this discrepancy, including the fact that Cyrus pulled focus in these ways—Cyrus being the more established celebrity and Gomez being an "up-and-comer" after Spears, Lohan, and Cyrus (Peretz). On one hand, Gomez's transition away from Disney wholesomeness may be eased by her identification as Latina, which can position her, according to stereotype, as already and appropriately more sexual, more passionate than her predecessor, Cyrus. On the other hand, Gomez may not be strongly identified as a Latina star due to her work on majority White-cast film and television projects and her other efforts to appeal to those White-inflected middle-class values discussed earlier as a site of struggle for Black and "White trash" identities. As Beltrán argues regarding Jennifer Lopez,

> through a high-class image, as manifest in Lopez's case in an emphasis on high fashion, grooming, and Lopez's own business franchise, entrenched tropes of Hollywood racialization in fact can be nullified or even reversed for some Latina/os (at least those with light skin and European features). (152)

Revealing clothing and platform heels are the fashion for young women today, and Gomez's stylish, class-conscious image has designers clamoring for her attention. "In the three years since she hit the red carpet of the Primetime Creative Emmy Awards in a gray, iridescent silk chiffon Marchesa gown, she's appeared on countless best-dressed lists" (Aminosharei 170). Taking up high fashion and encouraging her fans to express their own personal styles, whatever their budgets, Gomez, then, like Jennifer Lopez before her, looks "sexy and sophisticated" rather than "too sexy" for her young fans.

Gomez's successful rise to stardom and transition to womanhood have also been attributed to her romantic involvement with pop superstar Justin Bieber, with whom she appeared publically many times, though while they dated she remained relatively tight-lipped about their relationship, cultivating a level of privacy and decorum. Bieber, who is White and hails from Canada, is frequently feminized in popular U.S. press coverage. One journalist at AfterEllen.com, a website that celebrates lesbian and bisexual women in popular culture, comments on a change in his hairstyle, saying, "everyone's favorite faux lesbian Justin Bieber got a haircut the other day" (Snarker). This and similar articles, along with gossip blogs and a Tumblr.com feed devoted to the subject, insist that his shaggy haircut and soft facial features make him look like a lesbian. Bieber is also feminized by association as a result of his legion of tween female fans. The AfterEllen.com piece continues, "you were no doubt tipped off by this fact by mass

fainting and high-pitched shrieking amongst the 13-and-under demographic the world over" (Snarker). Bieber's much-celebrated Whiteness, youth, and feminine appeal, then, may provide Gomez a level of domestication or "tameness" that, in addition to her own efforts to align herself with high fashion and business savvy (as I will explore in Chapter four), help keep her from being hypersexualized as a stereotypical "fiery Latina." In addition, Gomez's relationship with this young, androgynous, Canadian performer may leave more masculine, White, U.S.-American men available to date Hollywood's blonde, blue-eyed feminine idols.

CONCLUSION

Clearly, gendered and classed racial formations in the U.S. have helped to structure girl-driven narratives and girls' visibility and spectacularization in media culture—as audiences and consumers, and as performers and producers. Raven-Symoné, Miley Cyrus, and Selena Gomez have been viewed as representatives of variously non-White or marginally White cultures, both on-screen while working for Disney Channel and off-screen as they have promoted their careers as performers and celebrities. As I have demonstrated above, conflicting discourses of idealized, postfeminist girlhood and unruly girlhood work in tandem with racialization to link audiences to and authenticate these performers and their performances of girlhood on Disney Channel.

In Symoné's case, both colorblind middle-class values and stereotypical tropes of Blackness influence her character Raven Baxter, whose "thick," Black, "grown-up" body may allow her to transgress boundaries in ways not possible for predecessors like Miley Cyrus' characters, Miley Stewart and Hannah Montana, who instead struggle to conform

to normative upper-middle-class Whiteness by policing femininity and disciplining their bodies (and others' bodies). Raven Baxter's onscreen unruliness is matched by Symoné's unruly celebrity image beyond the show. Symoné's unwillingness to dispel or confirm rumors about her homosexuality subverts the dismantling of boundaries between public and private spheres necessary to maintain obsessive celebrity culture. Meanwhile, Cyrus struggles against stereotypes of lower-class Whiteness as a Southern "White trash" celebrity, having played a transplanted Southern, "country" character on *Hannah Montana*. Regardless of the privileged positioning of her early career as superstar Hannah Montana, Cyrus now works to distinguish herself from that Disney image by embracing a "rocker's edge," primarily through her musical performances and interviews.

For Gomez, the "rocker's edge" that helps her transition away from Disney Channel stems from her slightly misanthropic character on *Wizards of Waverly Place* and from her construction as both an ethnic hybrid and as a Mexican-American success story. Gomez seems to be the least unruly of the three stars, embracing the opportunity to become an aspirational figure to young Latinas. Popular media coverage constructs Gomez as a formerly poor Latina and an up-and-coming celebrity who prides herself on representing age-appropriate feminine propriety, as well as a sort of Latina-appropriate level of sexual expression that evades moral panic and the overtly derogatory sexualization applied to Cyrus and others before her. Cyrus and her predecessors Spears and Lohan are publically attacked when they appear to transgress the bounds of idealized, White youthful (i.e., sexually innocent) femininity, as well as when they do not appear to conform to (White) middle-class values, which is difficult from the discursive standpoint

of "White trash." In contrast, the hybrid Gomez, who has been rescued from poverty (ostensibly by her hard-working Italian-American mother and/or by Disney), is expected to be desireable, to look sexy, to grow into a sexual woman, and, like all women and girls in postfeminist culture, to actively cultivate her heteronormative desireability. Gomez can appeal to normative middle-class values, Hollywood fantasies of discovery and success, and the realities of a growing Latina target market in the U.S. to strategically locate herself as a worthy role model—both personally and in terms of her career successes.

Gomez's willingness to take up the glamour, privilege, and accouterments of Hollywood stardom in ways that emphasize her femininity and visibility (i.e., via fashion) may allow her to be envisioned more easily as the kind of sophisticated film actor that stands as the ultimate goal in the contemporary U.S. fame hierarchy. Gomez's use of the potentially raunchy *Spring Breakers* role to transition away from her Disney image, although it would seem to threaten her sophisticated star image, appears to have worked more smoothly than similar attempts by Cyrus. First, Gomez's youngest audiences are less likely to be permitted to see an "R" rated film. Second, it creates the opportunity for Gomez to advance a protectionist stance regarding her young fans that may also appeal to their likewise protectionist parents/guardians. And third, her preemptive warning against seeing the film helps her avoid having to apologize after the fact as Cyrus has been expected to do. Cyrus' sexualization in *Vanity Fair*, at the Teen Choice Awards, and in performances of "Party in the USA" and "Can't Be Tamed," however, can be experienced by anyone with access to magazines, a computer, a television, or a smartphone.

While Cyrus has achieved a level of fame not so readily available to Symoné or Gomez, she continues to struggle against the contradictory normative expectations of the young White feminine ideal in celebrity-obsessed, consumerist postfeminist culture. Her performances are also more easily accessed for consumption, exploitation, and sexualization. Gomez's film is restricted to older audiences, and there has been little controversy related to her musical performances. Symoné's work beyond Disney is limited in comparison and frequently marginalized as relevant only to African-American audiences. Cyrus' extreme public visibility—in part a result of both her Whiteness and her failure as "White trash"—contributes to the moral panics surrounding her sexualization and her sexual expression. Gomez can capitalize on her visibility and Latina-ness, while Symoné remains queerly silent in the face of loud celebrity culture and the myth of Black homophobia. Moreover, Raven-Symoné is continually aligned with Disney family audiences, on the one hand, primarily through her voice-work in Disney animation, and with Black audiences, on the other hand, by participating in event programming on the BET network and appearing in magazines and on talk-shows targeting African-American audiences. Exploring the intersectional, structuring discourses of race, age, gender, and sexuality allows us to better understand the complexities of girls' performances of girlhood within Disney's entertainment empire and in postfeminist celebrity culture, which has become an increasingly significant site of identification in girls' popular culture.

The chapter that follows turns toward Disney's recent diversification of girl-driven franchises, beyond traditional vendor licensing, into proprietary merchandising

promoted by Disney Channel's girl stars. Via the *D-Signed* fashion collection, celebrity girls perform self-branding as well as a promotional function for Disney and its partners. I shift focus slightly in the next chapter to explore the work of Demi Lovato, Zendaya, and Bella Thorne, who have been key promotional figures in the development of this new tween-targeted proprietary fashion label.

Chapter 3: *D-Signed* for Girls: Disney Channel, Lifestyle Branding, and Tween Fashion Culture

INTRODUCTION[55]

During the 2010 back-to-school retail season, the Walt Disney Company introduced the first in a growing collection of fashion lines for tween girls under the umbrella label *D-Signed*, available at Target stores throughout the U.S. The initial line was based on the costumes of lead character Sonny Munroe of Disney Channel's *Sonny with a Chance* (2009-2011), played by Demi Lovato. This was not Disney's first foray into fashion for pre-teen or teen girl markets. Previous Disney lines include a multitude of character licensing deals throughout the company's history and, more recently, lines inspired by Disney Channel characters Lizzie McGuire (*Lizzie McGuire* 2001-2004, played by Hilary Duff) and Raven Baxter (*That's So Raven* 2003-2007, played by Raven-Symoné) and fashion lines promoting designs by Disney stars Miley Cyrus (*Hannah Montana* 2006-2011) and Selena Gomez (*Wizards of Waverly Place* 2007-2012). The introduction of the *D-Signed* collection, however, marks an unprecedented expansion of synergistic marketing strategies for comprehensive lifestyle branding for the tween girl market in the U.S.

As of October 2012, Disney also has introduced *D-Signed* fashion lines for the characters Alex Russo (*Wizards of Waverly Place*), CeCe Jones and Rocky Blue (*Shake It Up* 2010-present, played by Bella Thorne and Zendaya), Teddy Duncan (*Good Luck*

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[55] Some of the arguments made in this chapter will be published in a 2013 special television and fashion issue of *Film, Feminism, and Consumption* in my article titled "*D-Signed* for Girls: Disney Channel and Tween Fashion Culture."

Charlie 2010-present, played by Bridgit Mendler), Jessie Prescott (*Jessie* 2011-present, played by Debby Ryan), Chyna Parks (*A.N.T. Farm* 2011-present, played by China Anne McClain), and Ally Dawson (*Austin & Ally* 2011-present, played by Laura Marano), among others. The exponential growth of this particular fashion collection has allowed girls to, literally (at Target stores or at home) and virtually (via sponsored online dress-up games and social networks), try on the "edgy" fashions of Disney Channel's lead characters, all contained within the *D-Signed* brand.

Exploring the promotion of and inspiration for Disney's *D-Signed* fashion collection can allow us to understand not only how fashion functions economically and ideologically in relation to convergent television as a site of lifestyle marketing for tween girls, but also how contemporary girlhood is constructed in this arena of the Disney empire. Thus, this chapter asks, how might the *D-Signed* fashion collection function, discursively and economically, as a site for the reproduction and performance of a form of idealized, postfeminist tween girlhood? And how do fashion lines affiliated with Disney Channel programs function within and beyond Disney's entertainment empire?

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND METHODOLOGIES

Fashion is a form of communication. As Roland Barthes explains,

> [t]he wearing of an item of clothing is fundamentally an act of meaning that goes beyond modesty, ornamentation and protection. It is an act of signification and therefore a profoundly social act right at the very heart of the dialectic of society. (97)

Similarly concerned with the social construction of fashion, Annette Kuhn argued in the 1980s that we should understand dress, or the use of fashion, as a form of masquerade in

the performance of identity. For Angela McRobbie, in 2009, contemporary culture promotes a "postfeminist masquerade" for women to disguise feminist gains that might threaten the dominant heteronormative sex-gender system. Women's prioritizing of consumption in order to maintain the stereotypically feminine appearance required by postfeminist culture results in the pervasive expectation that girls, too, will enact that masquerade by participating in particular ways in what Sandra Lee Bartky has called the "fashion-beauty complex" (Bartky; McRobbie *The Aftermath*). Yet, the notion of the postfeminist masquerade may not be sufficient for understanding the relationship(s) between contemporary girlhood and the media and fashion industries.

I have argued in Chapter one and elsewhere for an understanding of how Disney Channel's *Hannah Montana* employs a sort of postfeminist masquerade of "girly-ness" for youth whose economic station is quite distinct from that of the women at the heart of McRobbie's conceptualization (Blue "The Best"). For McRobbie, young financially independent women, in particular, are expected to present themselves as sexually available and hyperfeminine in order to uphold what she calls the "new sexual contract" between men and women in contemporary society (*The Aftermath*). Girls cannot be easily grafted into this new sexual contract, however, since girlhood, perhaps especially in the West, is constructed amidst complex negotiations between discourses of sexual objectification and discourses of asexuality and innocence. Girls may be expected to harness their femininity and sexual desirability from younger and younger ages, but their youth also subjects them to ideals of femininity that deny their sexuality. Valerie Walkerdine has argued that the eroticisation of young girls is ubiquitous in popular

media, as is public ignorance and denial of the phenomenon (Walkerdine 254). Girls may be expected, in postfeminist culture, to be hyperfeminine and to look sexually sophisticated, yet they may not be hailed as knowing participants in the masquerade. Anita Harris describes female adolescence in the West as a process of girls' learning to be "preoccupied with the accidental or intended messages their flesh displays" and "to restrict their movements so as to preserve 'modesty'" ("Everything" 116). Adolescent girls have long been expected to maintain and control their bodies according to heteronormative conventions of traditional femininity, as Harris has argued. But the pervasive influence of a postfeminist sensibility within contemporary Western girls' culture also creates an environment in which girls are expected to embrace strategies of conformity and containment as "good" choices they make for themselves (Gill *Gender*; "Postfeminist"). The postfeminist sensibility in girls' contemporary popular culture, then, demands further analysis and continued interrogation of the strategies, ideologies, and products in which it manifests—here, those licensed, created, and/or promoted by the Walt Disney Company as the leading producer of commercial media for girls.

The postfeminist masquerade relies on the notion that fashion might be used by women to purposefully craft a disempowered self in the service of patriarchy and traditional gender roles. Taking gender as performative rather than expressive, as Judith Butler has, means that "there is no preexisting identity by which an act or attribute might be measured" ("Performative" 180). The "authentic" self, then, is constituted in gender performativity, which is enacted through and on the body. As Jennifer Craik argues, "Our habitus of clothing creates a 'face' which positively constructs an identity rather than

disguising a 'natural' body or 'real' identity" (Craik 4). If fashion and dress are integral to identity—helping to generate subjectivity and social relationships—then girls' interactions with fashion must be understood as part of the work of identity formation and performance of self rather than as a practice of concealing or expressing the self. Nikolas Rose finds that "while our culture of the self accords humans all sorts of capacities and endows all sorts of rights and privileges, it also divides, imposes burdens, and thrives upon the anxieties and disappointments generated by its own promises" (5). Postfeminist culture seems to both "take into account" and attempt to render invisible such divisions, burdens, anxieties, and disappointments (McRobbie *The Aftermath*). The *D-Signed* fashion collection cannot be understood simply a series of youthful feminine costumes, then. Rather, it is a dynamic collection of communicative products, inflected by the economic and political strategies of a global multi-media conglomerate, and it is a technology for girls' production and performance of the postfeminist self at the level of everyday practice.

Joanne Entwistle, Sarah Street, and Helen Warner each find that the study of mediated fashion has historically focused on film costume as disruptive spectacle or narrative device, privileging formal analysis. Warner suggests that

> a mixed methodological approach to the study of costume . . . provides a more productive foundation upon which to begin to examine the functions of onscreen fashion in contemporary U.S. television. ("Style" 183)

Without losing sight of the tween girl audience, or of the distinct industrial and cultural intricacies of contemporary television, then, my analysis combines media industries research with discursive, narrative, and ideological textual analysis. This chapter relies on

close readings of Disney promotional videos circulated via YouTube and corporate press releases, as well as analyses of the *D-Signed* clothes themselves and their relevance to the Disney Channel characters that inspire them. Specifically, I focus on promotions for the Sonny Munro *D-Signed* collection and the CeCe and Rocky *D-Signed* collection and the significance of their respective characters and stars (Demi Lovato and Bella Thorne and Zendaya).

My discursive analysis begins with an examination of how Disney Consumer Products (DCP), Target, and Disney Channel personnel speak about girls' fashion culture and how the clothing they produce and promote might function in girls' lives. Next, I analyze the Demi Lovato music video used to launch the initial *D-Signed* Sonny Munroe fashion line and a video recording of the fashion show held at the D23[56] Expo in 2011, circulated on the Disney Living YouTube channel to promote the 2012 CeCe & Rocky *D-Signed* collection. These videos, the clothes, and the promotional commentary regarding the *D-Signed* collection warrant critical attention as exemplars of Disney's marketing techniques. They also operate as sites of production for conventions of femininity and Western ideals of contemporary girlhood. How girls resist or negotiate Disney's ideological content and conventions of femininity, as they surely do, is beyond the scope of this research. This chapter instead constitutes an exploration of how girlhood is constructed by and through the Walt Disney Company's strategies for appealing to girls with franchise properties originating on Disney Channel and extending, in this case,

[56] D23 is Disney's official fan club, and the biennial D23 Expo is a fan convention, open to the public, that features celebrity appearances and performances and previews of product lines, films, games, and television programs as well as other events.

to fashion lines that reify certain television programs, characters, and stars as sites of identification meant to inspire girls' consumer and performative desires.

GIRLS' FASHION CULTURE AND FEMININE SUBJECTIVITY

Since the 1980s, teen and tween girls have been addressed as markets for hyperfeminine and sexually sophisticated consumer products. In particular, the fashion and beauty industries increasingly appeal to girls in ways that encourage agency within the realm of consumer choice and self-expression via sexualized physical appearance and adherence to trends and brand loyalty, if not designer label fetishism. McRobbie argues that fashion magazines function as sites of aspirational identification for young girls anticipating adolescence and womanhood (*Feminism*). Similarly, Daniel Cook and Susan Kaiser find that the sale of sexualized girls' apparel and its advertisement reflect the "anticipatory enculturation" of tween girlhood. For Cook and Kaiser, "An aspirational social identity, the tween, by definition, seeks to move out of 'tweenhood' and thus up the age prestige ladder" (206). While the Disney Channel stars mentioned in this chapter were in their teens when their *D-Signed* lines were produced, the target audience for the network's prime-time fare is made up of girls who fall into one of two age ranges (8-12 and 9-14), referenced in *D-Signed* press releases as "tween girls, sizes 4 to 16" ("Disney and Target"). DCP capitalizes on a long history of girls' emulation of their favourite aspirational characters, celebrities, and performers (see Stacey; Lewis; Douglas *Where*; Kellner; Lemish; Baker "Pop (In)to"). There may be nothing more iconic in girls' culture produced by the Disney Company than Cinderella's magical blue ball-gown, which in its

nearly 65-year history has spawned innumerable reproductions—both commercial and homemade—for girls of all ages.

Disney promotions for *D-Signed* collections hail girls as subjects who might identify with specific characters or performers, but more frequently as those concerned with style and self-expression. They reinforce "the norms of consumer society, which offers possibilities of a new commodity 'self' through consumption and the products of the fashion industry" (Kellner 263). Thus, Disney Channel programs and talent, and their related fashion lines, can easily function as part of a larger "anticipatory enculturation" of girl consumer audiences. Yet, this consumerist strategy of enculturation does not necessarily rely on the anticipation of adolescence, adulthood, or cultural visibility, as McRobbie reveals fashion magazines do (*Feminism*). Instead, it offers the more immediate—fleeting, yet repeatable—material satisfaction of consuming popular trends of fashion and celebrity. Rather than anticipating their teen or adult selves, tween girls are expected to try on the styles and habits of older girls and women by engaging in similar fashion culture and consumption practices made possible by *D-Signed*.

But girls may not only aspire to look or be older—they may simultaneously aspire to certain qualities of character, talents and lifestyles, which the *D-Signed* fashion collection is designed to capture and convey. For example, Executive Vice President of Global Fashion and Home for DCP, Pam Lifford states, "Our *D-Signed* collection at Target . . . allows young girls to express their fashion sense with quality clothing at budget friendly prices" ("Disney and Target"). Here, she describes the Sonny Munroe line in relation to girls' expressions of identity and individuality. Yet she necessarily also

refers to family budgetary concerns, since the commercial and industrial realities of these mass-produced, mediated fashions demand broad appeal and wide availability. Her gesture toward the family budget, as well as the partnership with Target itself, reveal that the line is geared toward middle-class and/or working-class consumers. Further, the *D-Signed* collection must appeal simultaneously to girls and their mothers, who are deemed most likely to actually purchase the clothes. "Tween girls want fashionable clothes that express their individuality and style but that moms approve of" ("Disney and Target"). Lifford suggests that girls want their mothers to approve of their clothing, though clearly mom's approval also directly benefits Target and DCP. Lifford's practiced rhetoric reveals an appeal to a stereotypical mother figure who shops on behalf of her daughter, presumably seeking a degree of conventionally modest feminine propriety for her daughter's wardrobe, and for whom the practicalities of the family budget are a significant influence. Lifford's comments therefore rely on the construction of a normative, submissive subject position for the girl consumer, created to comfort these imagined mothers. While mentioning the "budget friendly prices" of the *D-Signed* collection illuminates DCP's need to appeal to girls' parents and guardians who have experienced an economic recession since 2008, it also implicates girls in their families' economic status, suggesting that girls themselves should be conscious of the financial exigencies of expanding their wardrobes. DCP can effectively hail girls' parents or guardians by addressing girls as autonomous individuals looking for expressive outlets via fashion who also desire to please their mothers and save their families money.

Connecting distinct characters, narratives and star texts with each fashion line creates a sense of variety within the *D-Signed* collection and within the Disney Channel prime-time line-up. DCP, in partnership with Target Corporation[57] and Jaya Apparel Group, LLC,[58] launched the two initial *D-Signed* lines in 2010 (the Sonny Munroe Collection) and 2011 (the Alex Russo Collection). Since then, the trio has launched fashion lines to accompany nearly every new Disney Channel live-action series featuring a teen or tween girl, in addition to releasing seasonal updates for many lines and introducing new lines affiliated with Disney Channel Original Movies. The breadth of the collection offers consumers multiple entry points and possibilities for identification, while allowing Disney Channel characters to constitute the parameters for each line.

The collection simultaneously provides affordable, trendy clothing choices while also attempting to entrench girls and their parents/guardians within the Disney Channel brand by actively cultivating relationships between consumers and one or more transmedia franchise properties. Discourses of empowerment and individuality enacted through consumer choice and taste-based aesthetic distinctions are indicative of a postfeminist sensibility at work in contemporary culture (Gill *Gender*; "Postfeminist"). The promise of individuation meant to be fulfilled via consumer decision-making, here, suggests a circumscribed form of "empowerment" and identification for girl consumers. The choice between one or another *D-Signed* character line, or between one or another

[57] Target Corporation was established in Minnesota in 1962. It was originally founded in 1902 as Dayton Dry Goods Co., and later became Dayton Hudson Corporation.
[58] Jaya Apparel Group was established in California in 1982 under the name, L'koral, LLC.

piece of apparel under the *D-Signed* umbrella, can function, then, as a strategy of containment within the on-going commodification of girlhood.

Girls adopt and adapt fashion culture—particularly the discourse of glamour—in ways that allow them to expand their sense of who they might be or could become. Jackie Stacey's study of women's and girls' fan practices reveals that teens, in particular, have historically identified with and celebrated their favorite film stars by mimicking their hair, make-up, and fashion style. Similarly, Lisa Lewis's study of Madonna and Cyndi Lauper "wannabes" demonstrates the extent to which young female fans are willing to go in imitation of their favorite pop stars. Lewis finds that celebrity aspirations enacted through fashion can provide pleasure and legitimacy for girl music fans. "A sense of clothing and style as (female) knowledge and authority is precisely what 'wannabes' draw on when they reproduce the styles of the star on their own bodies" (Lewis 204). Studying tween girls specifically, Farah Malik finds that they engage with fashion magazines to negotiate subjectivity through the construction of style and habits of consumption. For Malik, a girl's

> *desire to be glamorous* (stemming from magazine representations and messages) . . . can encourage [her] to 'be all that she can be' . . . create aspiration and emulation . . . [and] broaden girls' world-views and sense of place by presenting possibilities for the attainment of success. (269, italics in original)

Contemporary Disney Channel programming and promotion, in particular, are rife with references to stars and requests that girls "shine," creating aspirational characters whose performances on and beyond the screen(s) make them celebrities. In Chapter one, for instance, I examine the relationship between Disney's luminous aesthetics of femininity

and the increasingly performative rhetoric directed at girls via Disney media and merchandise. Following McRobbie's theorization of "luminosities" as spaces of attention for girls and young women, I argue that Disney's discourse of sparkle and shine relies on girls' visibility (*The Aftermath*). It is, therefore, useful to think of media industries as another space of luminosity for girls, produced by postfeminist media culture—often in conjunction with the fashion-beauty complex. While scholars generally view consumerist aspirations in children's media as negative and limiting, the girls' studies researchers mentioned above point out their value for girls' identity production.

Girls watching Disney Channel programs, playing with *D-Signed* clothing in online dress-up games, and/or shopping the collection at Target stores—regardless of how they react to or interact with these products and their marketing—are incessantly hailed by multiple branches of the Walt Disney Company to appear like the characters they see and also to perform like the stars who play them. Glamour is a significant aspect of such performances. Carol Dyhouse argues that regardless of the Western democratization of glamour over the past few decades, glamour will probably always be "about fantasy, desire and longing" (204). Disney's pervasive aesthetic of sparkle and shine, discussed in Chapter one, in conjunction with its function as an aspirational girl-star machine, makes glamour an ever-present discourse in Disney media and products for girls. Rachel Moseley has argued that the glamorous makeover scene in teen media involving magic is significant to contemporary feminine identity production and "revealing of the pleasures and paradoxes at the heart of the postfeminist project" (407). For *D-Signed* to drive Disney franchises toward their $1billion revenue goal, its

glamorous appeal must be structured by celebrity fantasies and the Disney discourse of magic, but also by the practicalities of daily dress and everyday discount fashion for the tween girl audience.

In her discussion about the development of modern feminine style through the influence of popular cinema, Craik explains that,

> Femininity was constructed as a process of selecting an ideal image and adapting available clothing and cosmetics to realize an approximation to that ideal. The attributes of femininity were also shaped by the practicalities of everyday life, particularly that of striking a balance between work and leisure. (74)

While celebrity culture and discourses of glamour significantly influence fashion, the practicalities of growing bodies, grade-school cultures, parental budgets, active leisure, and online engagement also help to guide what will be fashionable for the contemporary tween girl market. Dawn Currie's study of teen girls' use of fashion magazines reveals that while girls go to lengths to describe their individual dress practices as distinct from others, school cultures dictate much of their wardrobes:

> If girls want to be a recognizable member of a social group, they are required to dress in ways which make them recognizably similar to their friends . . . This does not mean that girls do not value experimentation or do not attempt to "be different"; rather, it means that individual creativity must fall within limits set by the group. (Currie 228)

Thus, in addition to using fashion to emulate the glamour and style of aspirational stars and celebrities, girls also use dress to express identities and allegiances—to form and maintain communities and to communicate with one another on shared terms, developed through everyday practice and structured by peer groups.

Arguably, Disney Channel's characterisations of girlhood and the apparel based on them, designed for girls by DCP, work to create a bound fashion universe for tween girls. Speaking about the development of a *Hannah Montana* fashion line prior to the creation of the *D-Signed* label, Donna Sheridan, Vice President and General Manager of Apparel, Footwear, and Accessories for DCP stated, "[i]t's not a costume. A tween girl isn't doing dress up, they want to look like they could be Hannah Montana's friend. This is a fashion line" (Critchell). Rather than developing a culture of dress that employs selective use of idealized fashions, the *D-Signed* collection delivers the kind of enduring and flexible fashion brand that earlier one-off collections could not, by offering an evolving and expanding series of fashion lines conceptualized as complete everyday wardrobes. Yet, Sheridan's goal of offering girls the chance to look like they could be friends with the characters—and by extension Disney Channel stars—without "doing dress up," ignores the fact that these characters and their friends (as well as the stars) frequently do "dress up" both in glamorous and playful ways (Critchell). For instance, even Hannah's friend Lilly, who is sometimes constructed as a sporty tomboy, also engages in costume play when she dresses as Lola. And she dresses up for events like a date or a school dance in ways that might contradict the "everyday" construction of this new Disney wardrobe. In addition, seasonal updates to certain *D-Signed* lines incorporate holiday and special occasion dresses and accessories into the apparently more mundane collection. The press release announcing the initial line appeared in multiple outlets and referred to its "mix-and-match versatility," specifying plans for updates to the line, as well as to the larger collection ("Disney and Target"). While girls' social groups may set

the parameters for dress, here DCP and Disney Channel also play a role in generating a fashion culture around Disney Channel talent and characters, which, as I will explore further below, may also limit girls' creativity and experimentation.

COMMERCIAL TELEVISION AND THE TWEEN FASHION PARATEXT

During the cartoon boom of the 1980s, toy companies created cartoon programs that targeted boys and girls, ages three and older, as lucrative demographics for the sale of action figures and other toys advertised both within the shows and in commercial breaks. Tom Engelhardt has called this "the Strawberry Shortcake strategy" after the first successful cartoon with a licensed toy line tie-in. The cartoons and affiliated toy lines dominating commercial U.S. children's television during the 1980s targeted a wide age-range of consumer audiences, from the toddlers comprising the *Strawberry Shortcake* market (ages 3-4) to tweens who would play with He-Man and She-Ra action figures (marketed to kids 3 and older) or Barbie dolls (marketed to kids ages 36 months to twelve years). Such shows, which were subject to censorious attacks by members of Action for Children's Television (ACT) among other groups, "were a product of the conservative politics of deregulation, a politics that defined democracy as the capitalist right to profit" (Hendershot *Saturday* 95). Under Reagan's administration, the Federal Communications Commission had comprehensively deregulated children's television since issuing its Children's Policy Statement in 1974, which required broadcasters to "make a 'meaningful effort' to provide programming for 'both preschool and school-aged children'" (FCC 39397-39398, qtd. in Huston, Watkins, and Kunkel 427). Even after the FCC Children's Television Task Force found broadcasters lacking with regard to that

policy in 1979, the FCC ultimately declined to take any action. By 1984, the FCC had eliminated previous limitations on advertising during children's programming (Huston, Watkins, and Kunkel). This deregulation resulted in the widespread recognition that children were now "an ideal commercial market" (Banet-Weiser "Home is" 76).

Hendershot understands the children's cartoon programs that emerged during this period of deregulation as part of what Marsha Kinder terms "supersystems," since they function as "networks of intertextuality" that "cut across several modes of image production" and "foster collectability" through successful commodification of multiple related products (Hendershot *Saturday* 98-99; Kinder 122-123). Although the toy and cartoon tie-ins may demonstrate complex marketing logics, and although this approach and the related strategy of product placement are still in use, this straightforward advertisement of ancillary products via entertaining programming might seem to many today like the kind of obvious marketing strategy that audiences would reject as a ploy—perhaps especially media- and brand-savvy young audiences. As "'pioneers' of cyberspace," children and youth, in particular, engage with media using a variety of technologies, through which "brand culture functions as a kind of lifestyle politics for [them]—something someone is, or does, rather than pointing to a particular consumer good one purchases" (Banet-Weiser "Home is" 90-91). Since the early 2000s, as Amanda Lotz argues, the introduction of DVR technology and the option to purchase and download programs via iTunes has launched U.S. television into a "post-network" era in which television programming is increasingly divorced from the television set and from linear scheduled viewing (*The Television*). This phenomenon can also be understood as a

result of the broader technological and cultural shift that Henry Jenkins calls "media convergence" ("The cultural logic"; *Convergence*). Banet-Weiser finds that "for kids, 'watching' television increasingly means immersing oneself in a branded world of multi-media texts . . . and interactive technologies" ("Home is" 83). For networks like Disney, then, earning audience loyalty has meant courting children across media platforms, using lifestyle branding strategies to compel their attention. While the "tried-and-true" marketing strategies previously used to appeal to children lack the efficacy they once had, lifestyle branding has become integral to the success of the channel and its parent company/brand in this era of post-network and convergent television (Banet-Weiser "Home is" 89).

Disney, in particular, engages in synergistic cross-platform efforts to reach children, youth, and family audiences. Such efforts are prevalent in contemporary media industries, but also have been found at work throughout the history of media production, such as in Mary Celeste Kearney's analysis of the first "transmedia" franchises targeting girls. Kearney traces this phenomenon back as far as the 1940s in the U.S. ("Recycling"). Other scholars have referred to such texts as "commercial intertexts" and "franchise" properties, logics, or strategies (Meehan; Jenkins "The Cultural Logic"; Johnson "Devaluing"; *Media Franchising*). These terms are useful for conceptualizing children's television in the post-network era as they convey the interdependence of different media platforms, types of media texts, and marketing strategies. Here, I refer to Disney's girl-driven transmedia franchises in order to also call to attention the ways in which Disney

Channel narratives traverse the bounds of format and technology as part of the decades-long history of transmedia marketing to girls.

From as early as the 1950s, children's television has incorporated product advertisements, many of which were positioned as "integral, or [advertisements] that were an extension of the shows themselves" and "segues, or ones that linked the shows' segments together" and employed program actors as promoters (Alexander et. al. 8; McAllister). But a significant increase in reliance on branding since the 1990s has led television networks to develop new strategies for relating to audiences (Johnson *Branding Television*). The contemporary Disney Channel live-action programs that inspire the *D-Signed* lines may thus present a subtler, more insidious, form of marketing to tween girls than even the cartoons that doubled as toy commercials in the 1980s. John Thornton Caldwell's concept of "'relationship' branding" is useful here, for instance (Caldwell 245). Cable and broadcast networks have worked to develop affective relationships with their audiences by integrating digital technologies and the Internet into their marketing tactics (Caldwell). For example, the major U.S. networks have customized and heavily branded websites with separate pages devoted to featured programs, which foster interactivity in a variety of ways. These sites may allow viewers to browse fashion and music that appear on the shows, to watch and comment on video clips from the shows and from behind the scenes, and to watch or read ancillary narratives that extend the life of some series. In addition, the rise of the social network

Twitter (established in 2006) has resulted in the incorporation of Twitter hashtags[59] at the corner of the screen during certain programs to encourage viewers to follow and contribute to threads of discussion related to the program while they watch. These are just a few examples of the ways in which television networks have incorporated digital technologies and the Internet into their relationship branding strategies.

Disney Channel uses its interstitials (the promotions and public service announcements discussed in Chapter four, for example), websites, celebrity web interactions (via FaceBook, Twitter, and YouTube), and ancillary texts such as the *D-Signed* fashion lines to cultivate relationships between girl performers, girl consumers and audiences, and girl-focused media, taking advantage of what Monica Swindle terms "girl as affect." In late capitalism, as Swindle writes, "The pleasure and other positive affects now associated with girl as well as the attention it now gathers are used in an attempt to associate feelings with companies' products and brands" ([26]). Since the early 2000s, the tween girl market has erupted, reinvigorated by Disney Channel transmedia franchises, which extend beyond the earlier, more straightforward toy tie-ins. Disney's strategies of diversified lifestyle marketing and relationship branding have allowed for Disney Channel's girl performers to launch acting and pop music careers, and have relied on these girls' multi-hyphenate celebrity to generate tween girl audiences and consumers. In the case of *D-Signed*, the network has invested in the development of the tween

[59] Hashtags are labels that specify the topic or theme under discussion in a particular Twitter communication—the 140-character-maximum "tweets" that form the basis of the community.

fashion market as a way of strengthening each franchise as part of the Disney lifestyle brand.

The *D-Signed* fashion lines have been systematically built into Disney Channel's talent-driven franchise properties since the success of *Sonny with a Chance* (2009-2011). Previous Disney Channel franchises have incorporated character or performer-specific fashion lines, including the Lizzie McGuire line sold at Limited Too stores and Miley Cyrus' and Max Azria's collection sold in Walmart stores. With *D-Signed*, though, these and other short-lived lines are displaced by a potentially unending supply of new and updated fashion lines that directly benefit the Walt Disney Company and its partners. President of Disney Channels Worldwide, Gary Marsh, stated in 2012 that "For most people who act, getting a television show is the end product . . . For us, it's the launch pad" (qtd. in Rose "Disney Channel's"). His job is not to produce programs, "it's to build franchises and stars" (qtd. in Rose "Disney Channel's"). The commercial imperative is clear in Marsh's perspective that the network is not just creating exceptional content. Disney Channel is nurturing aspirational stars via transmedia franchises designed to provide multiple, related revenue streams.

The *D-Signed* fashion lines have thus become significant paratextual elements in their respective girl-targeted franchises. In *Show Sold Separately*, Jonathan Gray demonstrates the ways in which certain paratexts can vie for importance, both expanding upon and competing with primary media texts. His analysis of how playing with *Star Wars* action figures enhances audiences' interpretations of the films and how video games can offer viewers a chance to virtually enter the diegetic space of their related

programs and films suggests the potential of such products and texts to strengthen or alter relationships between audiences and media. His argument cannot be extended to the *D-Signed* lines, however, without considering also the function of lifestyle branding. Similar to relationship branding, lifestyle branding works to generate connections between consumer audiences and particular media and products (Arvidsson). It relies on the expectation that viewers will assume or adapt certain on-screen identities by bringing the objects of the diegesis into their daily lives—through aspects of play and fantasy, certainly, but in this case also through the perhaps more mundane affairs of discount shopping and daily dress, through what Bourdieu calls "habitus" (Arvidsson). Revealing Disney's thrust toward lifestyle branding through girl-centred sitcom franchises and fashion lines that began several years before the *D-Signed* launch, managing director of DCP Canada, Peter Noonan claimed in 2006 that "*That's So Raven* has transcended entertainment boundaries and now stands as a bona fide lifestyle brand for girls—encouraging them to express their sense of fashion and celebrate their unique style" (qtd. in "*That's So*"). Presenting fashion consumption as an opportunity to express individualism has become integral to the development of lifestyle brands for girls as well as the construction of the postfeminist sensibility in the context of neoliberalism. DCP personnel continually attempt to construct girls as autonomous, savvy consumers, all the while appealing also to their parents'/guardians' pocketbooks (if not to the disposable income of girls themselves).

Eliding its commercial motives, Disney Channel distinguishes itself from other children's entertainment by avoiding non-Disney product placement and advertising

within and between programs. This operating policy does have loopholes and exceptions, including occasional sponsorship advertisements for such companies as Sarah Lee, Dannon, and Walmart. Regardless, Disney Channel maintains its reputation as a space seemingly free from the commercial imperatives of other television networks and the world beyond the diegesis. Even so, this cable network may function just as potently to simultaneously advertise many of the products DCP has to offer. Although Disney Channel does not actively advertise *D-Signed* fashion lines, its programming and paratexts reinforce Disney principles and aesthetics, and DCP welcomes consumers into the Disney universe beyond the television screen, as they shop for Disney products in familiar stores, such as Home Depot, Bed, Bath & Beyond, and Target, as well as on the Internet. Inasmuch as Disney does offer the fashions seen on Disney Channel for purchase by those who shop at Target, the programs now can be understood also as de facto sites for product placement and window shopping, through which Disney stars, fashions, music, and the Disney Company are all promoted.

Disney Channel content has always been augmented by promotions for other Disney media, public service announcements, and network branded bumpers featuring Disney Channel talent. Yet, much fine-tuning of Disney Channel's development of girl-focused franchises has resulted in the integration of online promotional efforts and the creation of DCP, which also paved the way for the *D-Signed* collection. *Adweek* reported in 2009, "Disney says it has shifted from a strictly licensing business model to a consumer products firm capable of multifaceted strategies for innovation, quality and integrated branding efforts" (Polikarpov). The Walt Disney Company had fully

developed its consumer products division to take greater advantage of a growing licensing business, having moved into the arena of high fashion a few years before (Polikarpov).

With Disney's new strategy and personnel firmly in place, DCP's mission also meshed well with Target's current mantra, "Design for All," and its commitment to partnerships with well-known designers of a wide variety of consumer goods. Vice President of Marketing, Simon Waters envisioned DCP as particularly capable of creating the type of designer merchandise Target specialized in selling: "Collaborations with designers and manufacturers to create products are a priority for DCP . . .. There isn't any other brand on the planet that can do what we do with authenticity," (Polikarpov). DCP's decision to work with manufacturer Jaya Apparel Group is also significant, for although the *D-Signed* collections may be cheaply produced, Jaya Apparel Group has a reputation as the brand-builder that established 7 for All Mankind in the premium denim market and is the company that manufactures Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen's high-end fashion line, among others.[60] The *D-Signed* collection has been deftly branded, then, as both a series of overt Disney Channel referents and a design-conscious Target offering.

While considering the *D-Signed* collection in relation to children's television and lifestyle brands is useful, it is also worthwhile to consider its significance relative to other contemporary fashion-forward television programming and, as Helen Warner calls them, their "online intertexts" created by the networks as well as by fans ("Style" 184). For

[60] Twins Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen are former television child stars (*Full House*, ABC 1987-1995) who have become celebrity entrepreneurs and multimillion-dollar moguls in young adulthood.

instance, in contrast to the girls' everyday fashion culture being developed online and on cable television by Disney Channel and DCP, *Gossip Girl* (CW 2007-2012) targets teen and adult audiences with representations of elite teen glamour thus mimicking HBO's *Sex and the City* (1998-2004). Warner's work regarding fashion-forward television series, or programs that foreground the latest in designer fashion, illuminates the significance of young, fashion-conscious audiences and contemporary television's reliance on the Internet to market programs and networks via fashion consumption ("Style" 184). Similarly, Louisa Stein's analysis of the role of fashion in *Gossip Girl* viewers' participation in the online community of *Second Life* delineates the program's potential for transmedia exploitation among young female audiences active online.

Characters on *Gossip Girl* are always adorned in couture apparel and accessories, some of which are made available for sale on the *Gossip Girl* website. The show's female leads, Leighton Meester and Blake Lively, in particular, have become style icons in popular press, attending fashion shows and being photographed with well-known fashion designers. Disney Channel's fashion culture is similar to that of *Gossip Girl* in that the *D-Signed* apparel mimics costumes worn primarily by young actresses and pop music performers, upon whose likenesses brands are built and who become celebrity style icons in popular press. The Disney Channel costumes simultaneously become associated with celebrity and the glamour of Hollywood through the identities of some of the characters in the series, which are portrayed as professional entertainers and stars of stage and screen. For instance, on *Sonny with a Chance*, Lovato's character is an actress and singer on a sketch comedy series called *So Random*, and the protagonists of *Shake It Up* are

dancers on a television program called *Shake It Up Chicago*. But this relationship to glamour and celebrity is where the similarities between fashion-forward television shows like *Gossip Girl* and Disney Channel's fashion culture end. While the fashion featured in *Gossip Girl* and *Sex and the City* is generally attributed to celebrated designers and luxury brands (Gucci, Versace, Vera Wang, etc.) and is, thus, unattainable to the great majority of television viewers, the *D-Signed* lines offer a version of glamour made accessible to middle- and working-class girls via the discount store, Target.

Disney's focus on versatility, availability, and an effortlessly coordinated, yet practical aesthetic drives home the notion that these clothes can be worn every day by many girls. Janna Fischer, a spokesperson for Target, reveals:

> What's great about the collection is that it does [the layering] for you . . . what looks like a hooded sweater worn with a blazer over it is really only one piece. The hoodie and the jacket are sewn together but it gives the impression you are wearing both pieces. It makes accomplishing the style that the girls wear on the show very easy and affordable. You've effortlessly got the look. (qtd. in McCarthy)

Such garments create a particular look "effortlessly," with the goal of adapting the feminine ideals represented by Disney Channel characters and performers. But this collection may also limit the creative potential of girls' daily dress and its mix-and-match possibilities by incorporating two garments into one. (Some skirts and shorts also have leggings attached.) The success of the *D-Signed* collection relies, then, on the appeal of being able to incorporate glamour and celebrity emulation into everyday practices of dress. Clearly, Disney Channel programming, the *D-Signed* collection, and its promotion

cultivates a girls' fashion culture that looks and functions quite differently from the cost-prohibitive, aspirational fashion culture of shows like *Gossip Girl*.

D-SIGNED ONLINE

The *D-Signed* fashion lines are promoted by Disney online in several locations, including on Disney's websites, the Disney Living YouTube channel (established in 2009), and the social network and dress-up games at StarDoll.com, in addition to their presence on Target.com and in Target stores. The launch and continued promotion of the *D-Signed* fashions online, calls attention to the ways in which this media conglomerate employs the Internet as a site for developing and sustaining television audiences as also consumers of a multiplicity of other Disney texts, paratexts, experiences, and products. If we understand television as a convergent medium (Jenkins "The Cultural Logic"; *Convergence*), especially in the current post-network era (Lotz *The Television*) as discussed earlier in this chapter, then it is difficult to consider the cultural significance of Disney Channel programs apart from their online iterations and paratexts. According to Sharon Marie Ross, in her study of television in the digital age, "creating TV products that can thrive in different media forms, most crucially television and the Internet" is a key strategy for U.S. networks (*Beyond* 127). While television has long been understood, especially in relation to cinema, as an everyday medium, the daily presence also of digital media in the lives of many girls necessitates an understanding of television that extends beyond the traditional home screen to its online iterations. Ross explains that, "Corresponding to cross-platforming is the strategy of integrated ancillary products" (*Beyond* 127). Disney Channel has an active online hub for fans at Disney.com, offers

episodes of its series on iTunes.com, and can promote particular programs by association when promoting any of its girl performers on Disney Channel and Radio Disney. Specifically, Disney's website includes pages devoted to videos of seasonal *D-Signed* fashion shows, backstage interviews with Disney Channel stars, and character wardrobe tours at video.disney.com. Disney's "Style Studio" page offers styling demonstrations, sneak peeks into upcoming lines, and fashion design tutorials. And Disney's pages devoted to the annual D23 Expo describe the Expo's *D-Signed* fashion show and include links to the Disney "Fashion Lounge," which at one time featured "[c]lips of the fashion show, as well as exclusive backstage features . . . with new videos added throughout 2011" ("D23 Expo Fashion"). As of 2013, the "Fashion Lounge" links take users away from Disney.com directly to the "Disney Fashion Lounge" page of StarDoll.com, which I explore further below. Through these web pages and via Stardoll.com, and Disney's own animated dress-up games featuring Disney Channel characters,[61] DCP has taken advantage of multiple, interactive online outlets to promote the *D-Signed* collection from its inception.

Beyond the Disney websites, girls (and anyone else) can become members of the StarDoll community at the Swedish-run StarDoll.com, an international fashion- and celebrity-focused social network in which members can create and dress avatars, interact with one another, shop for clothes for their avatars and themselves, furnish virtual living spaces, play games, and create short videos starring their avatars. As one of its strategies

[61] For example, one game currently available is called "Jessie: Smarte Couture" and features some apparel from Jessie Prescott's (*Jessie*, starring Debby Ryan) wardrobe that also looks similar to the *D-Signed* Jessie collection available at Target, Target.com, and StarDoll.com.

of marketing the *D-Signed* collection online, Disney uses StarDoll.com to extend an association between *D-Signed*'s everyday clothes and the luxury of designer fashions promoted and exhibited alongside them on the site, as well as elsewhere in celebrity culture since the site is also geared toward dressing celebrity avatars or "StarDolls" who come with full wardrobes. The "Starplaza" works as a virtual shopping mall with designer label "shops," in which members can dress their virtual paper dolls, in *D-Signed* apparel, among other fashions.

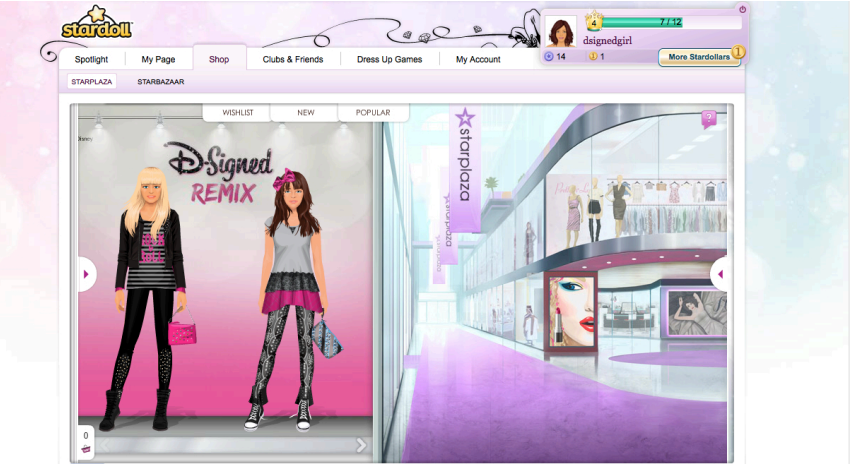

Illustration 7: Dressed avatars promote a new *D-Signed* fashion collection in the Starplaza on StarDoll.com. Source: screen capture. Copyright: StarDoll.com 2012; Disney 2012.

Illustration 8: A *D-Signed* virtual shop in Starplaza, with links to add apparel to a wish list and shop apparel at Target.com. Source: screen capture. Copyright: StarDoll.com 2012; Disney 2012; Target 2012.

"KidSafe" level members have limited access and possibilities for interaction at StarDoll.com. But with parental permission in the form of a seven-page signed consent contract that must be printed and faxed to the site's offices, kids under 13 can become full community members. And with parent supervision and a credit card or Paypal account, members can upgrade to the premium level, or "Superstar" membership.[62] As Superstar members, girls have access to a certain amount of StarDoll currency, or "StarDollars" each month (again, with parent/guardian's advance written approval and account supervision). StarDollars are virtual currency with which members can shop the StarDoll site for clothing and accessories for their avatars.[63] Full community members

[62] StarDoll.com adheres to the regulations of the U.S. Child Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) to protect the privacy and personal information of members under 13.

[63] Members can also accrue StarDollars through gifts and incentives offered by the site, so that one can be a community member without spending any money on the site. But the amount of StarDollars gifted is

and Superstars can also add apparel to wish lists for their avatars and for themselves, forward their *D-Signed* wish lists to family and friends via email, and click through the StarDoll site to shop the *D-Signed* collection at Target.com.[64] This encourages a degree of creative play with the clothing, while anchoring that play in the consumerist impulse, with all trajectories leading to the potential purchase—either virtual or material—of *D-Signed* apparel. Girls' virtual paper doll avatars can be dressed in *D-Signed* apparel, but the clothes cannot be incorporated into girls' virtual closets without a purchase.

In addition to the above online iterations, the *D-Signed* collection was launched using a version of the music video for "Me, Myself, and Time" that circulated on YouTube.com and via a Disney Consumer Products press release. The video, referred to in the press release as a "new YouTube music video from Disney Living featuring Demi Lovato's song, 'Me, Myself, and Time' and directed by filmmaker Ross Ching," is layered with references to Disney Channel programming and talent and features the first fashion line in the *D-Signed* collection—the Sonny Munroe line ("Disney and Target"). YouTube users repeatedly refer to this video as the "official" Demi Lovato music video, but it competes for that title with a different, less fashion-oriented, previously released version, which aired on *Sonny with a Chance* (April 11, 2010) and also circulates online. The *D-Signed* version serves as both music video and clothing commercial, advertising not only its song, album, artist, and record label, as all music videos do, but also the first line in the *D-Signed* collection, its availability at Target stores, and its association with

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usually not enough to sustain spending on designer or name-brand fashions or furnishings for more than a few weeks of membership.

[64] Once a user has clicked through to Target.com, she has left the StarDoll site, which means that users cannot directly purchase actual *D-Signed* clothing using StarDoll.com accounts.

Disney Channel and *Sonny with a Chance*. It is most productive, then, to understand the *D-Signed* collection and its promotional vehicles as part of a larger synergistic convergence of media, celebrity personae, and products, keeping in mind the potential for girls' resistance at each point of interaction.

THE *D-SIGNED* LAUNCH VIDEO AND THE SUNNY MONROE COLLECTION

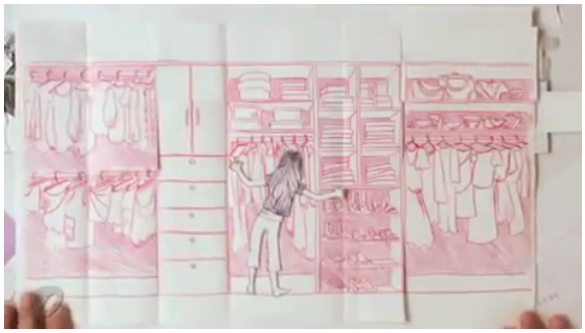
In the "Me, Myself, and Time" *D-Signed* video, Demi Lovato introduces the Sonny Munroe fashion line in a brief statement before the music begins, explaining that she loves to mix and match colors even when fashion dictates that they might not work together. Lovato's documentary-style introduction lays a foundation for the ways in which girls and their parents or guardians might interpret the Sonny Munroe line, positioning Demi Lovato's own fashion sense as its impetus. Lovato's familiar voice and presence represent the line, with no reference to otherwise unknown DCP personnel or the costume designers for *Sonny with a Chance*. This sequence also delineates the *D-Signed* mission as another opportunity for girls to express their individuality through dress.

By presenting Lovato's style as inspiration for this fashion line, and by using the rhetoric of individuality and expression, DCP establishes Lovato as a privileged voice and likeness, capable of dictating (or at least suggesting) fashion norms for her fans. Lovato is thus established as an articulate, confident, and sophisticated style icon and someone who resists dominant fashion ideologies in favor of individual expression, while the music to "Me, Myself, and Time" dictates the movement and tempo of the video. Neither Lovato nor the cast nor sets of *Sonny with a Chance* are the focus of the majority

of the footage, though Sonny/Demi's voice, music, and costumes drive the video. Lovato's brief "talking-head" segment dissolves to the live-audience performance of her song on the set of *Sonny with a Chance* in which she plays piano and sings in character as Sonny Munroe. A few seconds later, the video cuts to a thin, white tween girl with long, straight brown hair, sketching at a desk in her brightly colored bedroom, Lovato's performance clearly visible on the flat screen television/monitor beside her.

During the course of the video, the girl sketches designs for the *D-Signed* collection in her bedroom, then dances and struts with friends (represented by other tween girl models) through school hallways exhibiting the brand's various outfits, which change spontaneously on her body as she moves. The girl's agency as fashion designer established at the outset of the video and re-established in the end makes her the protagonist, yet the protagonist might also be the Sonny Munroe fashion line itself, as it completes a transition from live-action TV costume collection to the (white, upper-middle-class, tween-aged) girl-next-door's everyday fare. The clothes come into play first as interactive sketches that flesh-out the fantasy of a vast wardrobe in a large, perhaps mechanized, closet, references to which abound in girls' media culture. *Hannah Montana* features a room-sized, mechanized closet, for example. Raven's entire bedroom is adorned in clothes and accessories in *That's So Raven*, while key spaces in *Sonny with a Chance* include the prop and costume room and the girls' shared dressing room. Even Disney Channel's newest animated princess is presented with an expansive two-room closet filled with sparkling ball gowns upon moving into the palace (*Sofia the First: Once upon a Princess* 2012). In addition, backstage tour videos with Disney talent often focus

on the wardrobe racks. In this "Me, Myself, and Time" *D-Signed* video, an over-the-shoulder shot reveals the girl unfolding paper flaps to reveal her drawing of a growing and expansive closet, made up of four wide hanging bars and multiple shelves and drawers, full of clothes, as yet nondescript, in front of which a girl can be seen considering the options. When the page turns, the sketched girl stands front and center, her body replaced by a pull-tab featuring some of the outfits she has drawn. The sketched outfits appear one after another, racing past as the artist pulls the tab, while the head and feet of the girl in the drawing remain static.

Illustrations 9-10: The expanding closet. Source: motion picture capture; Disney Living Channel at YouTube.com. Copyright: Disney 2010.

Illustration 11: Selecting what to wear, using drawings. Source: motion picture capture; Disney Living Channel at YouTube.com. Copyright: Disney 2010.

When she has decided on an outfit, the drawn girl marches down the stairs and out into the morning light. Appearing on her front porch, she is real again—the artist who had been seated at the desk now stands in the sunlight. In this fantasy, the presence of the clothes themselves, more than the act of choosing or designing them as a form of self-expression, bring the girl into being and into the light. The drawn girl, then, is a fantasy made temporarily real in the world beyond the bedroom through the invocation of apparel available at Target stores and featured on Disney Channel. Of the significance of fashion to identity, Pamela Church Gibson writes, "[f]ashion is a storehouse of identity-kits, of surface parts which, assembled, determine the 'interior essence' which is subsequently taken to determine the assemblage itself" (356). The girl in this video is constructed as a product of the clothing she designs and exhibits. I do not wish to suggest a lack of self-awareness or reflexivity on the part of girl consumers or even this girl protagonist. Instead, I argue that the performative and unstable nature of postfeminist girlhood identities allows for the clothing to "make the girl," so to speak. For Douglas Kellner,

> in contemporary society, it may be more 'natural' to change identities, to switch with the changing winds of fashion . . . [suggesting] that identity can always be reconstructed, that one is free to change and produce oneself as one chooses. (243)

If one might change her own identity on a whim through consumer engagement, then appearing in *D-Signed* apparel—even without reference to the labor involved—can easily be construed as form of postmodern identity production.


Illustrations 12-13: The drawn girl heads outside into the daylight. Source: motion picture capture; Disney Living Channel at YouTube.com. Copyright: Disney 2010.

In the "Me, Myself, and Time" *D-Signed* video, fashion design and consumption are privileged over the processes of shopping and creative dressing as the key to girls' identity production. As in many television and film narratives, the act of shopping is elided in this video, and the generative process of dressing is reduced to a single choice. While avoiding a shopping montage helps foreground—perhaps especially for adult viewers and girls—the girl's agency and the confidence these clothes might offer, the superficiality of the creative process represented here would seem to mask the corporate nature of the fashion industry, which structures the girl's agency. Rather than an act of imagination, dressing is simplified to a matter of choosing one composed outfit over another in a truncated array of options. As Elspeth Probyn has argued, "In the West, choice is the benign bedrock of society. Be that in regard to the consumer imperative of choice to the all-pervasive political philosophy of self-fashioning, it is not possible not to choose" (232). For Probyn, Harris and others, the increased focus on "at-risk" girls and young women in societies of the West under late capitalism has often meant the

implication of girls and young women themselves in *choosing* their circumstances (Harris *Future*; Probyn). This reliance on individual choice is a key tenet of postfeminist culture and becomes central to marketing efforts that target "can-do" girl consumers, or those who make "good" choices (McRobbie "Top girls"; Harris *Future*). In the case of *D-Signed*, such efforts suggest variety in order to present consumer choice as a necessary and normalizing expression of individuality—opting out is not an option.

With the "Me, Myself, and Time" video, DCP can suggest the variety and individuating power of the *D-Signed* collection and bolster a sense of girls' agency by positioning a girl as the fashion designer. The collection, the video implies, has been created not only *for* but also *by* girls—particularly, fans of Demi Lovato and *Sonny with a Chance*. But positioning the girl as creative talent in this way also makes her a vehicle for the video's elision of the actual labor of producing and consuming these fashions. The "Me, Myself, and Time" video contains no mention of either DCP or Jaya Apparel Group, the creative and industrial engines producing and promoting the *D-Signed* collection, let alone mention of many of the individuals and groups (other than Lovato and Disney Channel) who produced the video and song. And with shopping and dress occurring beyond the diegesis, the labor involved in getting the Disney "look" is made invisible and maintained as seemingly effortless—a shared convention of both stereotypical Hollywood glamour and conventional femininity (Dyer *Stars*; Dyhouse; McRobbie *Feminism*). In her analysis of the beauty pages of *Jackie* magazine, McRobbie argues:

> In general . . . the emphasis is on two things, the end-product ('the look') and the means of achieving it. The fact that this depends on the consumption of special commodities is kept well in the background, so that the concept of *beauty* soars high above the mundanity of *consumption*. (*Feminism* 120, italics in original)

Similarly, this *D-Signed* launch video presents a creative and agential girl protagonist through whom the commercial aims of the Disney Channel franchise machine can create aspirational, consumerist fantasies to generate and maintain a tween girl target market.

The girl in this video is envisioned as a fashion designer and *D-Signed* model rather than as a particularly creative dresser or shopper. And the invisibility of the consumer labors of shopping and dress may contribute to a construction of the tween girl fashion designer as a fantasy—divorced from the economic and industrial realities of the production and consumption of *D-Signed* apparel. If, as I argue throughout this dissertation, Disney's programs and products address girls as postfeminist citizens whose power lies primarily in consumer choice, then this video works to exploit girls' creative agency, celebrity emulation, and interests in both individual expression and social belonging, to avoid making obvious its primary objective—to generate a "mom-approved" tween girl market for *D-Signed* fashion lines ("Disney and Target"). Simply put, the "Me, Myself, and Time" *D-Signed* video aims to appeal simultaneously to parents/guardians and to tween girls by "taking into account" girls' consumer empowerment and instead foregrounding girls' fashion consumption as creative agency (McRobbie *The Aftermath*).

Considering the significance of the tween girl consumer market to *D-Signed*, then, it is important also to analyze the representational politics at work and the aesthetic

conventions that mark these decidedly postfeminist images of contemporary girlhood. Normative representations of femininity and White privilege overwhelm attempts to appeal to a diverse audience when, as the "Me, Myself, and Time" video continues, the fair-skinned *D-Signed* girl is joined by two non-White friends. These two friends are represented as objects of the mise-en-scene, balancing each other, as they remain side-by-side, and three steps behind the protagonist. As the *D-Signed* girl walks to school, she passes other smiling youths in Disney licensed T-shirts and apparel (easily distinguished by the familiar Mickey Mouse logo). She meets a friend and hugs her, then launches into a group dance up the steps of the building. In the style of a runway fashion show staged in middle-school hallways, she and her two girlfriends, and then flaunt their trendy outfits, confident and smiling. In her study of girls' identity production in school, Shauna Pomerantz finds that "[s]tyle was the most common way in which girls were able to see similarities and differences among themselves" (91). The presence of these two friends in complimentary *D-Signed* apparel makes the protagonist of the "Me, Myself, and Time" video recognizable, both as a potential trend leader and as someone who fits into her particular social group. In this way, the central girl is privileged as a sort of girl-next-door stand-in for trend leader Demi Lovato. An unknown performer (none of the models are credited in the video), the girl who plays the protagonist may also represent the accessibility of this clothing line by suggesting that one does not have to be a Disney star to get the Disney "look." Further, her Whiteness displaces Lovato's Latina "difference" in the video. Coded as White and middle-class, the girl's youth as well may allow her less physically developed body to appear less sexual and therefore non-threatening—more

easily acceptable as a model for tween girlhood, perhaps especially in the eyes of White parents/guardians.


Illustrations 14-15: The girls enter the school; the girl designer's outfit changes with a flash of light. Source: motion picture capture; Disney Living Channel at YouTube.com. Copyright: Disney 2010.

The outfit featured early on in the "Me, Myself, and Time" video is frequently used to represent the Sonny Munroe fashion line, and is referred to, in the "D-Signed Target Fact Sheet" that accompanied the initial press release, as the "Picture Day Outfit" ("D-Signed Target Fact"). This labeling of the outfit links girls' school identities and girls' visibility to the *D-Signed* collection and Sonny Munroe. The outfit featured in this and other promotions of the Sonny Munroe fashion line consists of a yellow, grey, and black skirt with tulle edging, a black jacket with attached grey hoodie, a non-Disney-specific graphic tee, cropped black leggings, a lapel pin and coordinated bracelets and necklaces. But there are other outfits in this collection too, and they appear spontaneously in the video on the central girl as she walks.

Illustration 16: From left to right: one *D-Signed* Sonny Munroe outfit, the *D-Signed* "Picture Day Outfit," and the illustrated retail tag that depicts Sonny Munroe (Demi Lovato) wearing the costume version of the "Picture Day Outfit." Source: Disney Consumer Products. Copyright: Disney 2010.

Flanked by her friends, one with Asian features and the other African-American, the White girl, the girl designer, is the only one whose outfits change. As she exhibits dresses, blazers, and a variety of accessories, her friends, treated more like back-up dancers, appear only in their respective coordinated outfits: a fuchsia hoodie over a white T-shirt with a black skirt and leggings, and a white hoodie over a fuchsia T-shirt with dark purple pants, both with minimal accessories. Further, these two girls are depicted as interchangeable, alternately appearing on opposite sides of the White protagonist, though always in the same complimentary apparel and always behind her. Analyzing the presence of black women in one of pop star Madonna's music videos, bell hooks argues:

> Made to serve as supportive backdrop for Madonna's drama, black characters in *Like a Prayer* remind one of those early Hollywood depictions of singing black slaves in the great plantation movies or Shirley Temple films where Bojangles was trotted out to dance with Miss Shirley and spice up her act. Audiences were not supposed to be enamored of Bojangles, they were supposed to see just what a special little old white girl Shirley really was. (*Black Looks* 162)

The girls of color in the "Me, Myself, and Time" video, then, seem to demonstrate the continuation of a long history of characters who serve as a non-White "backdrop" for privileged White performers. The repeated and rhythmic appearance of the girls—dancing to Lovato's song, wearing Sonny's clothes—may represent *D-Signed* apparel as objects of creative self-expression and celebrity identification, but the objectifying power of the clothing to both privilege and commodify feminine, fashion-conscious, middle-class White girlhood reveals the commercial thrust of the video long before the *D-Signed* and Target logos finally appear.

This video may appeal to a diverse audience via aspirational representations of seemingly postracial, normative middle-class White youthful femininity, but it may also create a clear, and limited, picture of who the ideal *D-Signed* consumer is, as well as what her parents or guardians may want for her—to look trendy, to be the center of attention at school, to feel happy and confident, to be popular (i.e., to be able to perform White, middle-class privilege in her everyday life). Representations of Whiteness and class privilege abound on Disney Channel as they have elsewhere on U.S. television for decades (Lipsitz). The significance of these particular representations, however, is that they use everyday fashion, celebrity culture, and popular television in synch to construct normative girlhood as a desirable commodity. The *D-Signed* girl is a "can-do" girl, and an embodiment of postfeminist femininity and consumer empowerment.

THE *D-SIGNED* FASHION SHOW AND THE CECE & ROCKY COLLECTION

The fantastical hallway fashion show dance depicted in the Sonny Munroe music video analyzed above might be envisioned as a bland and simplified precursor to the

actual fashion show performances to promote the Spring 2012 CeCe & Rocky *D-Signed* line that occurred at the 2011 D23 Expo. Rather than focus on one specific video, here I analyze the D23 *D-Signed* fashion show itself, using footage streamed on StarDoll.com and later posted on the Disney Living YouTube channel as well as an amateur video produced by an un-credited member of the fashion show audience and posted on YouTube by "Disney Sisters." This fan-produced video, called "Bella Thorne & Zendaya Tween Fashion Show D-Signed Live from D23 Expo 2011," provides an unedited perspective on a segment of the fashion show and gives the impression that the audience is made up of fans, camera people, and Disney talent, if not also bloggers, journalists, and consumer products personnel. This video appears to have been produced by one of three women, who describe themselves on their Disney fan website as "3 sisters, who are also mothers, daughters, and the Best of Friends . . . we hope that Disney Sisters is an online destination suited for any and every Disney fan" (Disneysisters.com). Whether the footage was produced for the general readership of the website or specifically for the women and/or their daughters, it may be indicative of the ways in which Disney fans embrace the corporation's deployment of fashion and branding via the production and exploitation of girls' identification with Disney ethos, characters, and products.

As cameras and their users increasingly encroach upon the D23 Expo stage, tween girls strut up and down the runway, in the newest *Shake It Up* fashions, smiling, posing, and gesturing. The projection screen above the stage labels this the "Disney Fashion Lounge," using the same pink and black, sparkling graphic plastered virtually on StarDoll.com and Disney.com. Near the end of the show, the screen displays logos for

sponsors, including Payless Shoe Source (carrying related Disney Channel-inspired shoe lines), Fashion Delivers Charitable Foundation, Inc., and Stardoll, for which the tagline reads: "Fame, Fashion, and Friends." Up-beat Disney-produced pop and dance music familiar to Disney Channel and Radio Disney audiences blares, driving the rhythm of the runway walks, though that music has since been replaced in the "Disney Sisters" video, most likely due to threats of removal commonly launched by YouTube to avoid copyright infringement. The videos reveal moving spotlights that crown the stage, both augmenting the flash of cameras and perhaps reducing the need for camera lights or flash as they illuminate the space. Plush couches, overstuffed chairs, throw pillows, rugs, coffee tables, and a curtain splashed with fuchsia, purple, and blue light decorate the "Lounge" stage that provides a backdrop for the runway. The girls on stage are trained models, and *Shake It Up* stars Bella Thorne and Zendaya can be glimpsed sitting in the front row. This is no middle-school fantasy; this is a *D-Signed* fashion show.

Illustrations 17-18: The living-room- or lounge-themed furnishings are visible behind the model at the 2011 D23 Expo Fashion Show; camera operators follow the models up and down the runway. Source: motion picture capture; DisneySisters. Copyright: Disney 2011.

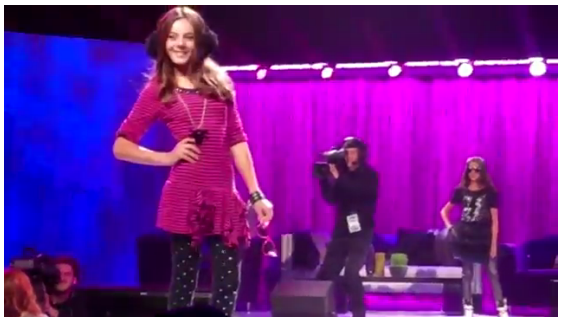


Illustration 19: A camera operator takes to the D23 Fashion Lounge stage during the *D-Signed* fashion show. Source: motion picture capture; DisneySisters. Copyright: Disney 2011.

At the D23 Expo, the live fashion show becomes a performative site for implicating tween girls in DCP's lifestyle branding strategies. From the lighting and décor to the music and modeling, this fashion show demands that girls perform contemporary femininity and youth in order to appeal to other girls and in ways that may imbue the clothing on display with new meaning(s). The colored lights against the back curtain alternate from one bright shade to the next as the spotlights above the stage move from side to side, sometimes crossing each other to shed beams of light on the runway and into the crowd. Intermittent flashes from cameras on and around the stage add a sense of sensationalism, perhaps connoting paparazzi and celebrity culture, but certainly signaling a level of public visibility being perpetuated as adults with press passes around their necks circle the models and the runway with their professional-grade video and still photography cameras.

Under the pink, then purple, then blue light, the furniture on stage may be meant to suggest a girl's own living space, though it does not necessarily replicate a bedroom or any of the institutional spaces in which many girls spend their time (such as a church or

school, for instance). Its colorful, modern mix of patterned pillows and luxurious seating allows this space to represent in more traditionally tangible terms the "virtual" Fashion Lounge offered by Disney and StarDoll online, constructing fashion as a matter of display more than as a process of shopping or dress. While the video launching the Sonny Munroe collection avoids representations of shopping and dress to focus on design as well as display, here display is reified above all else. Further, at the fashion show, the processes that beget fashion and its display are elided for a focus on the clothes and on looking, whereas online the space is one in which shopping, dress, and also fashion design are foregrounded.

Illustration 20: Logos for the Disney "Fashion Lounge" and partners, Payless, StarDoll, and the Fashion Delivers Foundation, scroll across the large screen that hangs under spotlights, above the D23 Expo stage. Source: motion picture capture; DisneySisters. Copyright: Disney 2011.

In the video footage of the D23 fashion show, empty couches and chairs return the crowd's gaze and are simultaneously offered up as positions for audience members to inhabit, even if only hypothetically. Those in attendance may imagine themselves as one of the models or as a designer, stylist, editor, or friend watching, judging, perhaps

commenting, from the "Fashion Lounge" as they may have seen done in popular television programs, such as *Project Runway* (Bravo 2004-2008; Lifetime 2009-present) and *America's Next Top Model* (UPN 2003-2006; The CW 2006-present), if not in their own personal experiences of shopping or trying on clothes. The audience may also be familiar with these critical roles in the fashion show performance from viewing similar performances in Disney Channel episodes, feature films, and made-for-TV movies or from playing the fashion-related games available on Disney.com. Yet, there are no references to "dressing up" here, per se. The clothes are presented as fashion rather than costume, and girls are hailed as autonomous consumer citizens rather than deferent youth to be dressed by their parents/guardians, according to school or family dress codes. Further, girls may be understood here as savvy consumers for whom, along with their parents/guardians, overt references to consumer excess may contradict both the budget-conscious logics of the *D-Signed* brand and the fantasy of an ever-expanding *D-Signed* wardrobe with no negative political or economic consequences.

Direct references to shopping are few and far between in this fashion show. For the most part, shopping in the Fashion Lounge is about looking at complete, composed, and styled outfits as the models exhibit them, imagining wearing them, and perhaps considering what it would be like to perform a similar fashion show at school or at home, on StarDoll.com, or in a Target store. I discuss below the few overt references to shopping found in the sponsorship credits and the song lyrics audible throughout the fashion show, but it is worth noting that the entire fashion show and its video coverage also constitute window-shopping opportunities for girls and parents/guardians. The D23

fashion show is meant to promote a recently released fall fashion line, and as such, it presents viewers with the opportunity to view and consider what these *D-Signed* pieces have to offer.

In addition to bright and exuberantly feminine décor and lighting at the D23 Expo fashion show, the pop music and youthful, peppy performances of the models encourage an uncritical, depoliticized perspective on the development and promotion of the expanding *D-Signed* collection. The music includes songs produced for Walt Disney Records and which appear on soundtracks associated with the *Shake It Up* series and with its stars and other Disney talent. Some of the songs are credited to Selena Gomez, Bella Thorne and Zendaya; others are performed by nearly unknown artists working with the same producers who develop music for Disney Channel series and stars. The song's lyrics link together references to shopping and fashion, music and dance, and luminosity and visibility. "All the Way Up" incorporates nearly all of these references:

> Your nails n' toes so painted (Fly) / hair is done just right, ain't it? / It's the third outfit n' countin' (Come on) / The beat is pumpin', were bouncin' our heads / C-c-clothes piled in the mountain beside the bed (Why?) / 'cause you don't wanna clean them up / We wanna dance instead (You're cool) / I see white and yellow lights (Stars) that are flashin' behind my girls (Come on) / who see earth is blue n' green cause their outta this world. / My lip-stick is red. I'm rockin' black jeans (Come on) / and we all superstars when we roll up on the scene (Come on). (Theodore)

Here a young female voice describes getting ready to go out to a club, choosing what outfit to wear, putting on make-up, dancing. She also relies on luminous imagery when she describes flashing lights and stars in order to invoke an image of herself and her friends as "superstars." Similarly, another song, "Roll the Dice," features the following

line: “when the music drops, it’s your time to shine,” (Alkenas et al.). Zendaya’s and Bella Thorne’s remixed version of “Watch Me” features Margaret Durante, Zendaya, and Thorne alternately singing, “I don’t need to pose for p-p-paparazzi / just keep the camera flashin’ to try to catch this action / I’m just being me / watch me do me” and a repeated chorus begins with “light up the floor” (Charles et al.). The models also walk in time to the *Shake It Up* theme song, performed by Selena Gomez (Archontis et al.). These songs contribute directly to the larger discourses of visibility, luminosity, and performance discussed throughout this dissertation, which find particular salience in contemporary U.S. popular culture when represented by idealized, postfeminist girlhood.

Extensive use of auto-tune to correct or augment singing performances in Disney-produced songs can make it difficult to determine who sings what since the distinctive aspects of individual voices may be obscured or eliminated in the process. Coupled with the repeated use of a limited number of production teams[65] on albums associated with *Shake It Up* and other Disney Channel programming, the use of auto-tune on these and other Disney recordings ensures that the songs sound similar and therefore also familiar, regardless of who sings on the recording. Though the music may seem increasingly homogenous, girls no doubt develop preferences and allegiances specific to certain songs, performers, and/or the series, videos, products, or movies with which the songs are associated. Ultimately, the use of this music to help promote the CeCe & Rocky fashion

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[65] For instance, three production groups are credited with producing the majority of the songs on the first *Shake It Up* soundtrack titled *Break It Down* (2011) and are also responsible for many of the songs that appear on other Disney Channel soundtracks, Disney stars’ albums, and Radio Disney. The *Break It Down* production teams include Twin (Niclas Molinder, Johan Alkenas, and Joacim Persson), Rock Mafia (Tim James and Antonina Armato), and Ben Charles, Aaron Harmon, and Jim Wes.

collection can strengthen audience identifications with its related characters and franchise properties, thereby broadening the market for Disney's tween lifestyle brand.

The CeCe & Rocky collection is different from other *D-Signed* lines in several ways, though it uses colors and styles similar to other concurrent lines. For example, as of December 2012, the newest *D-Signed* line featured in the StarDoll.com Disney Fashion Lounge and at Target stores was the Skylar Lewis line, inspired by the Disney feature film, *Girl vs. Monster* (2012). This fashion line was similar to the CeCe & Rocky collection concurrently available in that it was almost entirely black and fuchsia, with sequins.

The distinctions between the garments exhibited in the Expo fashion show and the Sonny Munroe line discussed previously can be correlated to the differences between the characters and programs upon which the lines are based. Specifically, the working-class milieu of *Shake It Up* is represented in part by CeCe and Rocky's penchant for thrift store shopping. The result of their limited disposable income and their "funky" taste (as it is described by others on the show) is the creative layering of casual, military, and semi-formal attire and accessories reminiscent of styles popularized in the 1980s by Madonna and Cyndi Lauper that have been revived also in women's fashion over the past decade or so. Bella Thorne and Zendaya also attempt to differentiate their characters, revealing in a backstage interview at the fashion show that CeCe's wardrobe involves much more green and earth tones while Rocky's closet overflows with bright colors. But despite claims to individuality and distinction, the two share a single *D-Signed* line in which garments and outfits are not labeled as either CeCe's or Rocky's. Even the naming convention has been

altered for this line. Where the other fashion lines are known by a single character's first and last name, this one drops patrilineal references, employing only the girls' nicknames and incorporating both characters into a single label. The girls' friendship and autonomy from parents thereby trumps the conventions of the brand as well as the normative use of full names imposed on them by parents who are frequently absent from their storylines.

Illustration 21: Apparel from the original CeCe & Rocky *D-Signed* collection. Left to right: A sparkly fuchsia and black outfit inspired by Rocky; the "Military Fabulous Ensemble" inspired by both characters' "Indie rock style," CeCe's preference for the military look, and Rocky's preference for black, sequins, and bold colors; the CeCe & Rocky retail tag ("*Shake It Up* Fact Sheet" 2011). Source: Disney Consumer Products. Copyright: Disney 2011.

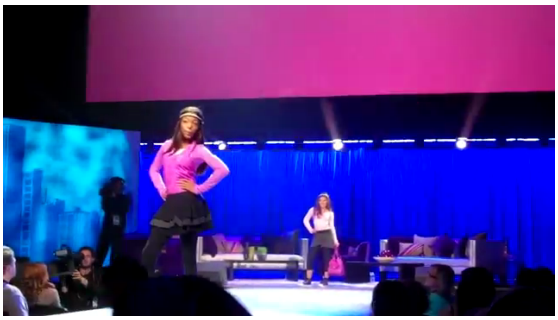
The garments in the CeCe & Rocky collection are similar in design to those in the Sonny Munroe line, but incorporate greater variety in print options and in styling details, such as use of sequins, asymmetrical hems, and the "ripped jeans" look. The CeCe & Rocky collection uses black as its overwhelming, neutral base color, accented by white, bright colors (especially fuchsia and neon yellow), and sequins. The collection includes

faux torn leggings, sequined scarves, vests, leggings, and fingerless gloves, metallic leggings, hats, vests and jackets over graphic T-shirts, ruffled tunics, full skirts with tulle hem, stretch miniskirts, asymmetrical cuts and zebra and cheetah prints. While DCP, Disney Channel, and Target executives argue that the *D-Signed* collection allows girls to express their individuality, some lines may allow for more creative dress than others. In particular, the CeCe & Rocky collection offers a somewhat wider variety of individual pieces than the previous Sonny Munroe line did. The newer line still encourages layering, but the pieces are less likely to come pre-layered, allowing for more mixing and matching with other apparel, as well as allowing for cross-collection promotion and sales.

Perhaps the most significant distinction of the CeCe & Rocky collection is the creation of an associated active-wear line for girls produced by lululemon athletica, called ivivva athletica. This line was also modeled in the D23 Expo fashion show and is inspired by *Shake It Up*'s focus on dance. The original line and its later iterations sometimes reference the style of the CeCe & Rocky *D-Signed* collection, but the athletic wear is constructed of lululemon's technical fabrics, and the patterns and colors are simpler, more uniform, and look more like adult active wear than school clothes. The ivivva line does offer options for layering and incorporates some similarly styled garments, including leggings, skirts, hoodies, arm warmers, and fingerless gloves, for instance. When questioned about the CeCe & Rocky collection and the *Shake It Up* ivivva athletica line, Senior Vice President of Fashion and Home at DCP, Stephen Teglas, stated:

> What we've learned is . . . when you get to the transitional tween, 9- or 10-year-olds, they want to wear what is in the closet of CeCe or Rocky so they can emulate them. To continue to be relevant with these tween girls you need to build a dialogue with them. And our dialogue has got to be fashion first and foremost; anything else will be short-lived . . .. If we're serious about this tween business, we need to . . . [communicate] with the girls where they are and in a way that they want to be communicated to. (qtd. in Lynch)

For Teglas, DCP's marketing aim is to target tween girls "where they are," and *Shake It Up* has allowed the division to do just that. Because the show includes dance, music, and fashion, he has envisioned it from early on as "a nice trifecta of relevance in what tween girls are spending their time doing" (qtd. in Lynch). DCP, thus, works to communicate with girls through music, incitements to dance, and fashion consumption, because that is ostensibly "where [girls] are." Specifically, this is where Disney imagines upper-middle-class girls are—girls whose families can afford dance classes and lululemon athletic attire and regular updates to their everyday wardrobes. While the Target offerings may appeal to the budget-conscious, DCP's partnership with lululemon extends the Disney tween fashion culture to address some girls' extracurricular activities with a brand known for its high quality, more costly yoga and exercise apparel. The ivivva line relies on the discursive construction of an active, creative "can-do" girlhood worthy of the chance to "shine." Through dance performance, augmented by ivivva athletica attire and inspired by *Shake It Up*, girls can claim their luminosity and make themselves visible such that they might be discovered and made famous—like their favorite Disney stars and characters. Yet, the marketing of apparel specifically for girls who dance can be seen as a way of further commodifying girlhood, commercializing dance and related pursuits, and privileging aesthetics and middle-class-ness over agency.

Illustrations 22-23: Models exhibit apparel and accessories from the ivivva athletica active-wear collection at the 2011 D23 Expo Fashion Show. Source: motion picture capture. Copyright: Disney 2011.

CONCLUSION

Deploying girls' images and performances, the Walt Disney Company is at the forefront of commercial enterprise that exploits girls and discourses of girlhood in increasingly complex and problematic ways. As the conglomerate attends to girl consumers, now more pointedly than ever, it is impossible to ignore the relationships between contemporary girlhood, Disney Channel programming, and affiliated texts and products. The quickly growing, successful *D-Signed* fashion collection constitutes seamless cross-promotion of apparel, Disney stars, their sitcoms and music, and the broader Disney lifestyle brand targeting young, female viewers of prime-time Disney Channel programming.

The economic and aesthetic parameters that delimit the *D-Signed* collection demand that we consider it as functionally different from the other products typically developed as paratexts related to children's programming. For girls, dress can have subversive and expressive potential, but the repeated representation of the Sonny Munroe

collection as a series of always/already well-crafted outfits may actually elide girls' agency by divesting dress of its expressive, generative potential. (And that elision of agency with performance is reproduced via the *Shake It Up* fashion lines, which use dance as a vehicle for aspirational fashion consumption to target middle-and working-class girls.) The "Me, Myself, and Time" *D-Signed* girl is not depicted trying on outfits, sharing or exchanging pieces. Instead her clothes change magically, like Cinderella's torn dress being turned into that iconic ball-gown with the flick of her Fairy Godmother's magic wand. Layered, accessorized, and fully composed outfits appear on her frame at regular intervals. The "Me, Myself, and Time" video celebrates the end result of girls' creative and consumer choices, constrained by the *D-Signed* brand. Practices of dress and consumption are likewise neglected at the D23 fashion show, though those practices are somewhat more central to the *D-Signed* experience on StarDoll.com. Dubious as the mythology of identity and empowerment through consumer choice may be, it is telling that the process of choosing clothing is subsumed within the display of professionally styled, complete outfits, restricting girls even this enactment of power, which could allow them to challenge normative ideologies of femininity, youth, and consumer culture.

While the functions of fashion in the Disney children's media empire can help us explore how Disney might influence contemporary discourses of U.S. girlhood, market synergy cannot tell the whole story. It is important to reiterate the work that the *D-Signed* outfits do as costumes that can continually reference Disney Channel. But Craik argues for an understanding of fashion that moves beyond consumer culture, conceptualizing it as "a general technique of acculturation" that operates in everyday life through practices

of dress (8). The Sonny Munroe and CeCe and Rocky lines, as well as others in the *D-Signed* collection, must also be understood, then, as paratexts—as media forms and as technologies for bringing elements of particular Disney Channel diegeses into the lived experiences of girls. As a result of this paratextual function, girls' practices of dress may be bound by the characterizations of the television content from which the apparel originates. Ultimately, it is the straightforward display of consumer fashion which functions as a supposed site of empowerment for the girls in the *D-Signed* launch video. In addition, DCP's and Target's promotional efforts implicate girls in the production and maintenance of Disney Channel's transmedia franchises. DCP and Target personnel attest to *D-Signed'*s potential for allowing girls to express their individuality, and, as I discuss in Chapter one, girls are increasingly called upon by Disney to embrace visibility and luminosity through entertainment performance. Yet, as I have shown above, the promotional efforts for these fashion lines, along with the economics and aesthetics of the *D-Signed* collection, may work to limit to the realms of Disney media, celebrity, and consumption, the very creative and critical possibilities of girls' dress and identity-production that Disney aims to foster.

The following chapter continues the discussion of Disney's relationship branding practices, but moves into the realms of corporate discourse and public citizenship. Selena Gomez, Miley Cyrus, and Raven-Symoné are the focus of Chapter four's explorations of celebrity entrepreneurship and "celebrity-brand activism" in relation to Disney's politics of corporate responsibility.

Chapter 4: Outgrowing Disney Channel: Celebrity Girls' Citizenship and Entrepreneurism

INTRODUCTION

International media companies, charitable organizations, and advocacy groups increasingly exploit images of girls as cultural and political symbols, while simultaneously exploiting the visibility of celebrity girls. In the U.S., celebrity girls' voices, actions, and public visibility make them the focus of much attention in entertainment trades and gossip publications as well as in the realms of business and philanthropy. Significantly, the majority of these celebrity girls are performers in and producers of mainstream media. While they garner a great amount of attention via the media sensationalism, scandal, and sexualization frequently associated with adolescent female celebrity, their presence in the public sphere also extends beyond these forms of exploitation. For instance, Selena Gomez's appearance in *Forbes Magazine*'s "100 Most Powerful Celebrities" issue in June 2012 and her cover interview for the July 2012 issue of *Elle* magazine invoke her as a mogul and public citizen—discursive positions that are typically not girl-oriented. These interviews are useful, then, for thinking through the progressive potential of girls' visibility to expand popular conceptualizations of girlhood within commercial media industries in the U.S. Gomez's celebrity is an exemplary case study for complicating notions of tween and teen girls as simply a target consumer demographic since those girls also help to construct her as a media producer, just as her status as a girl is contested.

Along with Gomez, former Disney Channel stars Raven-Symoné and Miley Cyrus each have moved beyond the children's television network to pursue film, music, and fashion projects in association with other divisions of the Disney Company as well as independently of Disney. In addition to their acting and singing careers, each of them has taken on a producer role—or at least the title—for some of the films and TV programs in which she appears, forming her own production company at some point along the way. Raven-Symoné was a producer for episodes of the fourth season of *That's So Raven* (2003-2007) under the "That's So Productions" banner, reportedly declining a director role. She was an Executive Producer of the Disney made-for-TV movie, *Cheetah Girls 2* (2006), as well as of the feature film *College Road Trip*, produced by Walt Disney Studios (2008). She has mentioned developing media projects with her own team in multiple interviews. Miley Cyrus and her mother, Tish Cyrus, formed Hope Town Entertainment in 2009 to produce acting vehicles for the young star. Selena Gomez recently formed July Moon Productions to develop film roles with her mother and business partner, Mandy Teefy.

Each of these three stars has also participated, to varying degrees with and without Disney support, in public service projects, philanthropic organizations, and activist efforts. The Walt Disney Company requires a certain level of civic engagement of its talent, contracting them to appear in Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and to become spokespeople for charities and advocacy groups as a central part of its corporate citizenship efforts. The company is thus able to celebrate and reify the values associated with its brand, through performers' labors toward social responsibility and what Alison

Hearn calls "celebrity-brand activism," while also taking advantage of corporate tax incentives and deductions for charitable contributions.

Still, much of these girls' labor—material and immaterial—as media producers and cultural citizens remains obscured by popular media's focus on their bodies, romantic relationships, style, and celebrity. In an era of increasing exploitation of youthful femininity that can position girls as postfeminist subjects in the neoliberal order, this chapter constitutes an exploration of what it might mean to envision girls as activists, entrepreneurs, and active public citizens in the context of expanded self-branding practices and capitalist, masculinist, colonialist corporate discourses and institutions. The question guiding this chapter is, therefore, twofold. First, how does Disney maximize its young, female talent in pursuit of corporate citizenship as a brand strategy for Disney Channel? And second: how might aspects of celebrity girls' self-branding practices, civic participation, and forays into various arenas of business work to legitimate their visibility, reflecting a shift in how and where girls and girlhood are invoked in contemporary public discourse? Ultimately, this chapter asks: What are the cultural, political, and discursive implications of girls' celebrity and celebrity girls' labors within postfeminist media culture?

Before moving on to describe how this chapter addresses the above questions, it is useful to historicize Disney's relationship to the celebrity girls discussed below. While there are a few other precedents for considering young female stars as celebrity entrepreneurs, singer and actor Annette Funicello (perhaps best known as Disney's most beloved Mouseketeer from 1955-1957) makes the clearest historical choice for

comparison to contemporary Disney stars—perhaps especially in relation to Selena Gomez. Similar discourses have circulated about Funicello and Gomez regarding their ability to speak "authentically" through their ethnic heritage (Funicello as Italian-American and Gomez as Mexican-American, although she is also part Italian-American). In addition, this discourse of ethnic difference has been used to construct both Funicello and Gomez as somewhat universal "girl-next-door" performers. Funicello earned her first and only producer credit in the late 1980s when she co-executive produced the feature film, *Back to the Beach*, but her many roles playing "herself" for Disney television and film throughout her career are also notable when thinking of her as a media producer. Also similar to Gomez, Funicello eventually launched product lines, including fragrances and collectible teddy bears. Those efforts have funded The Annette Funicello Research Fund for Neurological Diseases, fighting Multiple Sclerosis. Funicello remains an important figure in Disney's history, and the most significant early precursor to the franchised and heavily licensed fame achieved by contemporary girls on Disney Channel. A key distinction to be made here is that while Funicello was under contract(s) with Disney, it was the *Company* that licensed products in her name and developed roles for her—reportedly also attempting to dictate her costumes and dialogue according to conventions of middle-class femininity, concerned that an exposed navel on the beach might sully that "girl-next-door," family-friendly image so strongly associated with Disney (Nilsen). Disney certainly also produces and markets licensed merchandise in Gomez's name, but Gomez, in contrast, has developed fashion lines and her first fragrance by forming business partnerships independently of the Disney Company. The

same is true for Miley Cyrus whose music career, in particular, has resulted in the production of ancillary lines of merchandise, along with a fashion line, and licensed products for the girl-targeted Daisy Rock Guitars. Raven-Symoné's celebrity-brand, however, has yet to produce branded merchandise independently of Disney.

As media industries have embraced diversification and synergistic marketing practices, the pervasive nature of postfeminist cultural discourse and the increased significance it affords visibility and celebrity have together created this climate in which the Walt Disney Company can, from the late twentieth-century forward, more easily and successfully locate and nurture one after another girl performer in pursuit of girls' audience and consumer loyalty. In the context of neoliberalism, the intense popularity of girl-focused multi-media franchises demands a re-examination of notions of celebrity, media production, and the role of the producer, in order to understand the different ways in which girls' participation in the development and promotion of such commercial media texts might influence and be influenced by conventional discourses of U.S. girlhood and celebrity. It then becomes necessary to situate Disney Channel's girl performers not only as participants in brand culture, but also within the culture of self-branding in which they become aspirational guides whose creative labor functions in part to reproduce celebrity girlhood as desirable and possible for any girl.[66]

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[66] Kim Allen's research with girls in the U.K. explores the productive aspects of celebrity for girls' "educational and future work identities," acknowledging the class hierarchies invoked in other studies of contemporary girls' relationship to fame. The girls in her study managed complex responses to fame as they structured their future work identities in relation to the career possibilities it seemed to open up for them, including considering behind-the-scenes jobs that might not result in the sort of "easy celebrity" often attributed to girl performers and presented by others as that to which girl fans aspire.

As I have argued in Chapter one, the pervasive incitement to entertain in Disney Channel's girl-targeted texts, promotions, and products addresses girls in the audience as potential celebrities and pop stars, asking, "Who will be the next Disney girl?" The Disney Channel stars I consider throughout this dissertation may become vessels for and exemplars of this particularly postfeminist form of address that imagines girls—as a general category, blind to differences of socioeconomic class, ability, ethnicity, and race—as performers. To fulfill an apparent social responsibility to express themselves by singing, dancing, acting, modeling, and/or "presenting" for public consumption—to perform the girlhood envisioned by Disney personnel, talent, and texts—girls must have access to technologies of visibility and certain physical and mental capacities (to say nothing of the emotional and psychological demands of celebrity). The Disney Company may provide a corporate model for the business of celebrity franchising, but as I have shown throughout this dissertation, it also provides a model of postfeminist subjectification for girls. This model may limit girls' creativity and critical awareness just as it claims to bolster girls' expressive individuality and just as it allows for girls' increasing power, agency, visibility, and autonomy in a variety of public arenas.

METHODOLOGY

Analyzing trades and popular press coverage, interviews, corporate reports and symposium notes, and citizenship campaigns affiliated with Disney Channel franchises starring Raven-Symoné, Miley Cyrus, and Selena Gomez, since the debut of *That's So Raven* in 2003, this chapter delineates the potential implications of these girls' visibility as public citizens and producers of contemporary U.S. commercial media. The texts

relied on most heavily in this chapter include transcribed notes taken by Alisa Perren at the 38th annual International Radio and Television Society Foundation's Faculty/Industry Seminar held at The Walt Disney Company Worldwide Headquarters in Burbank, California, August 10-11, 2009, referred to below as "the IRTS seminar."[67] Also, publically available reports issued by the Walt Disney Company regarding its citizenship and environmental conservation goals, along with related information available online at thewaltdisneycompany.com and disney.com inform my understanding of the corporate discourse and citizenship strategies employed by the conglomerate. In addition to these materials and others associated with Disney's citizenship campaigns, as well as multiple widely publicized interviews and press releases, this chapter also explores the discursive construction of media executives, young celebrities, and celebrity-brand activism in *Variety* magazine's Youth Impact Reports, published from 2007 to 2011.

I explore the materials introduced above in the context of contemporary discourses of femininity, citizenship, and celebrity branding that circulate around and through Raven-Symoné, Miley Cyrus, and Selena Gomez. Specifically, I focus on the ways in which these performers speak about, and are spoken about in terms of, growing up or "out-growing" their Disney Channel image(s) and audience(s) as they pursue film roles, undertake roles as media producers, and enter the realms of business and philanthropy—especially through efforts to support and "empower" other girls. The

[67] The theme of the seminar was: "Disney Channels Worldwide: Leadership and Influence in the Global Marketplace."

analysis of girl-produced discourse is key in this chapter since, as a feminist researcher, I advocate for understanding girls as experts in their own experiences and owners of knowledge. Critical awareness is also key as I seek to understand the functions and contextual significance of these girls' rhetoric. Here I am interested in opening up space for theorizing how discourses of celebrity and girlhood frame girl performers' creative labor, and how those discourses might simultaneously constrain them while allowing them to be invoked in discourses of business and public citizenship, where girls historically have not figured.

Although I have defined "girls" and "girlhood" elsewhere in this dissertation, I find it necessary to explain my references here to the twenty-something Gomez, Cyrus, and Symoné as "girls." I understand these three performers as girls, in part because they are between the ages of 11 and 19 in many, though not all, of the materials discussed here and because they perform as teenage characters in texts that target a tween-aged Disney Channel audience. Yet, I make no claims to determining their developmental stages of life and do not mean to discuss them as particularly *not* adults or *not* women. In an interview for *Glamour* magazine in September 2011, Gomez referred to the importance of her Disney fans and presented herself as "not yet a woman,"[68] saying:

> Disney and my fans have gotten me to where I'm at, so I would never want to do anything that would offend them. I'm going to get older and turn into a woman, but right now I hope I can make projects that everybody is able to go out and see. (qtd. in Jacques et al. 352)

[68] This colloquial phrase referring to the liminality of girlhood is also part of the title of one of former-Mouseketeer Britney Spears' hit songs, "I'm Not a Girl, Not Yet a Woman," (*Britney*, Jive Records 2002).

My project purposefully explores Gomez and the others as "girls" as a result of the discourses already in circulation and in which they participate that construct them as such, and also in order to grapple with how that construct shifts as each of them ages and as they increasingly participate in various adult male-dominated spheres of business and creative labor beyond Disney Channel. In this way we can understand the many references to Gomez, Symoné, and Cyrus, online and in print, that attest to each "growing out of her Disney Channel role" or having "broken away from Disney" as part of their construction as girls since these protestations of being "all grown up" exist alongside constant references to their Disney work and alongside the continued popularity of those texts and related products among girl audiences to whom, in part, they credit their successes.

When I refer to these performers as "media producers," I am referring to the many different ways in which they participate in the creation of media texts as well as their creative labor to produce and promote services and products, though certainly I do not wish to devalue the labor of the agents, consultants, managers (including their parents), and other performers who work with and for them. Although there has been a significant rise in the production of media by girls in the U.S. since the early 1990s, the majority of that production continues to occur outside the confines and resource systems of conglomerate, commercial media industries. Mary Celeste Kearney has researched girls' media production in recent decades, focusing on girls' creative work as individual and collaborative producers of zines, films, web sites, and music with radical potential to subvert commercial media messages and practices (*Girls Make*). The girl producers

discussed in this project, however, have been involved in contractual relationships with the largest media conglomerate in the world—one that produces much of the commercial and mainstream media for children and youth in the U.S. and, increasingly, internationally. These stars have worked with vetted and well-compensated media professionals throughout their careers, developing TV programs, films, and other media products that, while potentially having subversive elements, also provide new revenue streams for the conglomerate and its subsidiaries, as well as for the girl whose name and image they exploit. In response to a call by Sarah Banet-Weiser for "a new conceptualization of these terms ["consumer" and "producer"] and the contradictions between them," my project begins not with the consumer/audience who also interacts with and produces media, but instead with the popular media producers and performers who have been significant agents of consumer culture for those participatory audiences ("Home is" 91). Each of the girls discussed in this chapter embodies the blurring of that consumer/audience and producer dichotomy, and the Disney Company has relied to varying degrees on their work, their names and likenesses, and their relevance among young audiences to convey responsible corporate citizenship.

CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP AND THE DISNEY CHANNEL COMMUNITY

While images of girlhood and girls' culture have become ubiquitous in contemporary capitalist cultures, the visibility of responsible corporate citizenship has also become increasingly important to investors and consumers across industries. Laurie Ouelette has referred to this shift in the commercial television industry as "the do-good turn in U.S. television" (Ouelette 57). Media corporations in 2012, such as the Walt

Disney Company, devote more time, space, and resources to expressions of social awareness and community involvement than they did even just five or six years ago, particularly by using television and web holdings, in addition to dedicated corporate conservation and responsibility reports, to promote "do-gooder" re-branding.

> The do-good turn in U.S. television operates as an informal partnership between a supportive (but minimally involved) public sector, commercial television networks, socially responsible advertisers, private charities and nonprofit organizations, and TV viewers who are increasingly expected to use the resources coordinated by television (and its tie-in websites) to modify their lifestyles, support causes, build communities, consume ethically, and perform volunteerism. (Ouelette 57-58)

Disney Channel and its affiliated websites and partner organizations do all of the above, in part by employing images of girls and discourses of girlhood and girl culture to appeal to actual girls and their parents/guardians, as well as to appeal to the affective register of girl as I have discussed in Chapter three (Swindle).

John Thornton Caldwell refers to the turn toward corporate responsibility on the part of television networks as a form of "'relationship' branding" (Caldwell 245). I have explored this concept in the previous chapter, specifically in relation to Disney's franchise diversification into tween fashion as an effort to cultivate affective relationships between consumer audiences and Disney media and merchandise. Meanwhile, in *Branding Television*, Catherine Johnson argues that corporate responsibility initiatives have swiftly become central to branding a network in relation to its target demographics.

> Corporate social responsibility campaigns are based on the belief that corporations need to do more than simply provide a service or product that consumers which to buy. They must also embody the ideals and values of the

> consumer in order to form meaningful emotional relationships between the consumer and the product/corporation. (50)

The familiar faces and voices of Disney Channel's girl-identified talent become keys to Disney's relationship branding strategy. Images of girlhood increasingly are used to symbolize social and cultural anxieties—vulnerability and power, national identity, and futurity—while girls' visibility makes them marketable targets for commercial products (Projansky "Mass Magazine"). For instance, below I discuss how Disney's environmental campaign, Friends for Change: Project Green (2009), employs Disney Channel stars to promote its causes, related media events, and community activism. They humanize the company in ways that statistics about responsible manufacturing and improved theme park facilities, working conditions, policy-making, and environmental concerns cannot. When it comes to relating to Disney shareholders, however, such statistics dominate annual reports and FAQs, while Disney Channel talent are seldom represented. For example, the Walt Disney Company devotes several pages of online content to describing its "corporate citizenship."

Clicking through the links on Disney's corporate citizenship site reveals a table of statistics to show how certain aspects of the company have changed from 2009-2011, including, for instance, percentages of minority, female, child, and involuntary employment. The table also lists percentages related to Disney's ethical sourcing of manufacturing materials[69] in facilities around the world, although there is little in the

[69] Ethical sourcing refers to a wide range of efforts by the conglomerate and/or its partners to use materials acquired with attention to the environmental and humanitarian issues that may arise in their collection, transport, use, and distribution.

way of explanation to clarify for non-business-minded readers to what the numbers or categories refer. Instead, consumers and audiences might consult the written descriptions of Disney's efforts to meet its stated goals, which appear in the FAQ section as follows:

> At Disney, our goal is to achieve exceptional performance by embedding citizenship into all of our daily decisions and actions, guided by three core principles:
>
> - Act and create in an ethical manner and consider the consequences of our decisions on people and the planet
> - Champion the happiness and well-being of kids, parents and families in our endeavors
> - Inspire kids and families to make a lasting, positive change in the world

Part of Disney's investment in corporate citizenship can be found, then, not only in its pledges, promotions, and activities, but in the ethos of citizenship it hopes to generate among employees and consumer audiences. These three overarching principles are explored in greater detail in Disney's "Citizenship Targets 2012" document.

The third bullet point in the above list is further broken down into seven different "targets," or goals, and their "contexts"—which alternately read like vague statements of hope for "positive change" or like methods for monetizing those targets. Each target is briefly stated with a deadline and a numerical goal for audience or employee engagement of some sort. I quote these targets below, with paraphrased comments from their related "Context" descriptions:

> By 2020, provide opportunities for kids and families to take 20 million actions that help people, communities and the planet ["small individual actions can have a collective impact that transforms communities"]
>
> By 2016, air 300 hours of content annually that showcases kids' contributions to their communities and the environment [using television and online spaces to

> "recognize the impact [kids] are having on communities and inspire others to do the same"]
>
> By 2020, contribute more than 5 million hours of community service through the Disney VoluntEARS program ["Volunteerism is an enduring part of Disney's legacy and culture."]
>
> By 2013, set a baseline for the percentage of employees who volunteer at least one hour of service annually in the VoluntEARS program [dedicated to promoting "a culture of giving" among employees]
>
> Maintain the high level of understanding that employees have about the role they can play in helping Disney be a responsible company [via biennial research into "employee opinions and behavior around citizenship"]
>
> By 2013, all employees will receive citizenship information during recruitment, orientation, or on-boarding [as part of "at least one day of formal orientation covering . . . brand immersion, ethics, and business standards"]
>
> By 2012, engage over 4 million players through online games to raise awareness of, and participation in, giving back to people and the planet [by encouraging "connected play" with games produced by Disney Online Studios]
>
> By 2012, launch a pilot creativity project [to prime potential future employees who might one day give the company a creative "competitive edge"]
>
> By 2015, connect 35 million kids and families with nature experiences [at Walt Disney Parks and Resorts] ("Citizenship Targets 2012" 28-31)

The legacy of Disney's principles, values, and altruistic rhetoric, not to mention maintenance of the conglomerate's economic dominance, are deeply entrenched in this demonstrated reliance on employees and audiences to act as markers of Disney's corporate citizenship (Smoodin; Wasko; Budd and Kirsch; Sammond; Giroux and Pollack). In this list of targets, consumers of Disney online games become vehicles for environmental awareness, and Disney Channel viewers become vehicles both for exhibiting kids' citizenship achievements and for spreading an interest in "positive

change" just by watching and being influenced "by their peers." Here, Disney employees' citizenship can be measured in millions of hours dedicated to various initiatives. Potential future employees are generated through training in an as yet undefined "creativity pilot project." And "nature experiences" become a draw for families to visit Disney Parks and Resorts. The relationship between Disney Channel (among other Disney divisions) and its target consumer audiences of families, children, and particularly tween girls takes shape through Disney's professed devotion to the causes those viewers and consumers also care about—children's health and well-being and the environment.

In relation to talent-driven franchises, the need to "get people involved" has been a central concern for executives at Disney Channel for the past several years. According to Gary Marsh at the IRTS Seminar in 2009, by 2003 the network relied heavily on cultivating young talent to generate audiences, and "franchise power" had come to the fore with the recognition that it was "driven by lifestyle choices—like what people stood for, not just their faces." In fact, Disney has long constructed audiences' capacity to "get involved" as important to the company. Nicholas Sammond writes of Disney in the 1930s that the company "also promoted its *process* and strove to create a sense that its audience was involved in that process" (italics in original, Sammond 172). And as recently as in June 2013, Disney CEO Bob Iger reiterates the importance of audience lifestyles to the Disney brand, constructing Disney texts and products as experiences rather than "consumables":

> if you are a global brand like Disney, and we're different from a brand perspective because we're not a consumable, really, even though people consume our products, they buy our product. We're much more of an experience

> brand, whether you're watching a movie, watching a television show, certainly going to a theme park. ("Iger")

Since, according to Marsh, as of 2003 Disney subsidiaries "[could not] grow much more, franchises became a greater priority" (qtd. in IRTS Seminar notes). The goal for Disney Channel since at least the early 2000s has been to "creep into the lives and life spaces of kids beyond the TV networks," in ways that encourage kids to interact with Disney media in a "platform-agnostic" sense (Marsh qtd. in IRTS Seminar notes).

In addition to this new approach to Disney talent franchises, President of Disney Channels Worldwide Rich Ross had sights set on tween audiences—he and others rely on "tween" here to connote both age range and gender—whom he referred to as "virgin real estate" for franchise promotion (Ross qtd. in IRTS Seminar notes). Although Disney personnel aim to promote a humanitarian approach to marketing via lifestyle and relationship branding and their requisite citizenship campaigns, their use of such sexist and colonialist language might complicate those efforts. Not found in publicly available corporate documentation, these comments appear in conversational presentations and interviews given to simplify business strategies into sound bites and concise descriptions, helping to form the industry jargon or corporate discourse of the Disney Company. Viewers are reduced to demographics and dehumanizing colloquialisms, performers become "owned talent" or franchise properties, and executives have the privilege of naming them. This corporate discourse reifies an "us" versus "them"/corporation versus consumers binary that effectively erases individuals and communities from the discussion of Disney practices, rather than uniting them. If

"people and communities" are the purported focus of the Disney Company, we might expect them to be the focus also of its corporate discourse. Instead, these discursive constructions of girls as "owned talent" and "virgin real estate" attest to the capitalist motives of the company and its personnel. As I argue below, Disney's corporate discourse relies on a repetitive statement of allegiance to "people and communities," and on girls and appeals to girl culture, as ways of humanizing the Company.

For Adam Bonnett, Senior Vice President of Original Series at Disney Channel and Disney XD, Disney Channel original series "have meant so much to tweens" because they "invite people to be part of something . . . not just sit back and watch" (qtd. in IRTS Seminar notes). Specifically, he mentions the draw of Miley Cyrus as "just like the viewers" and the use of "aspirational narratives" of kids starting out from "nowhere" or "nothing" to become superstars, to brand the network as being "about not just watching but joining, being part of" something bigger (Bonnett qtd. in IRTS Seminar notes). Reliance on a simple binary positions viewers as "nothing" or "from nowhere" and creates a desire to be brought into existence by "superstar" franchise status. In addition, Bonnet constructs Disney Channel viewership as a form of citizenship, suggesting that kids' desire to be part of the world of the heavily branded network allows them to envision themselves capable of and worthy of the achievements and recognition of the kids they see on screen. While this approach to socializing young citizens may have benefits, the rhetorical shift required to explain it reveals the importance of celebrity—and by extension visibility—to the child-as-citizen scenario being described. Viewership

and visibility in commercial television become intertwined as a jumping off point for kids to affect social, if somewhat depoliticized, awareness and change.

In Disney Channel interstitials,[70] selected members of the audience, Disney stars, and other celebrity spokespeople alike encourage audiences to "get involved" in their communities, in some cases offering small grants and the opportunity to appear on Disney Channel as possible rewards. These interstitials take a few forms. They include PSAs, such as those for Friends for Change (FFC),[71] and shorts that function as bumpers between programs, such as those in which individual children from the Disney Channel audience present an aspect of their culture or heritage. And there are promotional spots during program breaks, including those for the Friends for Change Games and other programs, as well as for initiatives like the Let's Move! campaign.[72] In particular, the audience mobilization, directed in partnership with Youth Service America (YSA), issued Friends for Change Grants to fund a range of projects administered by kids ages 5-18. Projects featured on the YSA website include one called "Follow UR Star" (Chattanooga, TN) that promotes "literacy and a better self-image" through theater games that allow kids to "find their own "inner-star," one facilitated by Galesburg Augusta Primary School (Galesburg, MI) that restores native plants to damaged

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[70] Interstitials here refers to series and network promotional segments aired between or during long-form television programs. According to John Ellis, since the 1990s, interstitials have become more important to networks that have increasingly allowed them to encroach upon programming time-allotments.

[71] Friends for Change is an environmentally-conscious initiative established by Disney in 2009 to demonstrate Disney's corporate responsibility and to encourage kids' involvement with Disney Channel, Disney.com, and related campaigns.

[72] The Let's Move! campaign was initiated by First Lady Michelle Obama in 2010 to combat childhood obesity in the U.S. The campaign's PSAs on Disney Channel encourage kids to dance, play sports, and eat healthy snacks.

wetlands, and a third project, called "Envirothon" (Dickinson County, MI) to create a community recycling drive. YSA is a non-profit volunteer organization whose mission is to "[improve] communities by increasing the number and the diversity of young people, ages 5-25, serving in substantive roles" ("About Youth Service America"). The partnership with YSA is indicative, then, of Disney's investment in community building and youth volunteerism. It is worth noting also the above use of star discourse in the development of public service projects for children and youth meant to boost self-confidence. This discourse is rampant in girl culture and Disney's consumer franchises, and, as I have shown in Chapter three, it relies on notions of stars and celebrities as aspirational figures for girls while potentially reproducing postfeminist and neoliberal sensibilities. The other two YSA campaigns mentioned above employ Disney Channel talent in support of Disney's commitment to environmental causes.

These environmental initiatives, featured on the YSA website, are funded by FFC grants that easily illustrate Disney's commitment to protecting the planet. Although Disney stars are not featured on the FFC Grants page, Miley Cyrus is credited with joining forces with YSA to create her own service organization, "Get UR Good On" (discussed further in the next section), and she and other Disney Channel talent participate in the FFC campaigns, which, in 2011 included the Friends for Change Games. The FFC Games, aired on Disney Channel, is an Olympics-based series of events in which Disney Channel talent from several countries compete to benefit

charities.[73] The charities represented by the four teams in 2011 were the Ocean Conservancy, the World Wildlife Fund, Flora and Fauna International, and UNICEF. The overwhelming focus on preserving wildlife and plant life can ensure that Disney's efforts to promote children's citizenship remain somewhat apolitical, having removed from the equation the great majority of possible sticking points of human difference. Disney's pledge to support the children's charity, UNICEF, can function in much the same way, positioning the world's children as innocent and in need of protection and preservation just as animals and their environs appear to be. The focus on animals and children fosters children's interest not only in conservation and volunteerism, but in Disney Channel, Disney.com, and Disney talent. The first event of the 2011 Games reportedly had 3.4 million viewers, with the series' viewership topping out at 37 million with 22 million page views online. The finale special, featuring a concert performed by several Disney recording artists was number one in the ratings among kids 6-11 and tweens 9-14 in its time slot ("'Disney Friends'").

Just as consumers and audiences are addressed as potential members of a global Disney Channel community, Disney Channel talent are also expected to participate in community engagement activities. The repeated mantra is that employees of the Disney Company are held "to the highest standard of quality, ethics and social responsibility" ("Disney Workplaces"). And one of the company's stated goals has been to "Integrate

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[73] The FFC initiative replaced the previous Disney Channel Games, airing specials in 2009 and 2010, before holding the FFC Games in 2011. The FFC Games were not held in 2012. The four events in 2011 were: the High Energy Dance Battle, the Wash Out (involving washing and drying clothes with human-powered washing machines), The Recycler, and the Ultimate Course for Change (an obstacle course with "green themes").

citizenship into the responsibilities of every Disney employee . . . by embedding citizenship into our daily decisions and actions" ("Disney Citizenship Targets" 2). Increasingly, then, Disney employees are not only encouraged, but also contractually obligated, to participate in socially relevant, community-minded activities. And the Walt Disney Company provides specific opportunities through its VoluntEARS program and the above Disney Channel campaigns.[74] Disney Channel performers would have little reason not to take on opportunities for easy altruistic and apolitical humanitarian self-promotion.

One of FFC's earliest campaigns, "Project Green," launched in May 2009 with promotional shorts, including a music video that features The Jonas Brothers, Selena Gomez, Demi Lovato, and Miley Cyrus, and a PSA in which Gomez, Lovato, and Cyrus encourage kids to register on the campaign's web site and pledge their support. Alison Hearn refers to this campaign as "one of the most cynical and opportunistic examples of environmentalism as cause celebré" because it "summons [kids] to align their interests with those of a transnational corporate behemoth," and "it also naturalizes a view that corporate philanthropy is the real power behind social change, even as it promotes individual responsibility as paramount" (Hearn 34). In addition to its implications for young audiences, this effort also may serve a pedagogical function for the talent who promote it. In teaching audiences about Project Green, Gomez, Lovato, and Cyrus also

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[74] In addition to Disney Friends for Change, recent campaigns involving Disney Channel stars have included raising awareness about bullying, First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move healthy lifestyle initiative, and an ongoing partnership with UNICEF.

learn how to sell saccharine social change initiatives with mass appeal using corporate brand strategies and high production values.

Promoting Project Green

The central theme of the FFC campaign is friendship, which also plays into the stars' roles on Disney Channel (each of their characters has a close friendship with another girl) and is reflected in their non-Disney-related social media participation, including their creation of video series about their friendships (Cyrus' *The Miley and Mandy Show* and Lovato's and Gomez's *The Demi and Selena Show* on YouTube, for example). Friendship between girls, in particular, is significant to the Project Green campaign and also may have worked as damage control in the context of publicized arguments between these stars and Cyrus' repeated statements that "girls are catty" and "I just don't get along with girls as well as I do with guys" (Rosenberg "Miley: 2009"; "Miley: You"). In the FFC PSA, Cyrus, Gomez, and Lovato help to construct friendship as a powerful network that encompasses both viewers and stars by continuously referencing their own friendships and the possibility that you too could be one of their "friends" by registering with FFC. Here, friendship also becomes a tool through which youths can easily join forces and help the Disney Company make "monumental change." The stars inform viewers that if they "Reg & Pledge" online, they will get to vote on how the Company will spend $1million to preserve the planet. In her chapter, "Brand Me 'Activist'," Hearn asks, "What form of revolution is fomented when individuals follow their favorite celebrities' 'green dos and don'ts' or vote on which green project Disney should support with 1 million of its billions of dollars?" (Hearn

23). I would extend that inquiry to ask instead: What does it mean to adapt notions of girlhood in the pursuit of social responsibility as a form of corporate relationship branding? For Cyrus, Gomez, and Lovato, if not also for Raven-Symoné (who was not active in FCC), aspects of girlhood—here girls' friendships—become lucrative tools for connecting with audiences and developing their own modes of responsible citizenship that look similar to those of the Disney Corporation.

In efforts to better understand Disney's commitment to sustainable corporate citizenship, Michelle Micheletti and Deitlind Stolle find that the Disney Company balances "its role in environmental protection [in direct relation] to its economic bottom line" (101). As such, it is necessary to keep in mind the economic and promotional functions of all Disney content and to acknowledge the "responsibility swapping" or "responsibility-sharing" that occurs when capitalist enterprises confront "the new politics of consumption" (Micheletti and Stolle 101, 103). Micheletti and Stolle describe a climate in which the increased consumer activism of the 1990s created demand for sustainability and corporate citizenship initiatives. "The new politics of consumption," then, is a politics in which evidence of sustainable business practices and corporate responsibility is of increasing importance to consumers (Micheletti and Stolle). Disney Channel performers and their viewers become implicated as individually and collectively responsible for addressing sustainability concerns to help Disney "help the planet." While it may be difficult to calculate the profits produced by these campaigns for the Disney Company, they draw traffic away from major competitors to a variety of Disney outlets and can enhance its corporate responsibility profile across demographic

and national boundaries. Further, such efforts draw attention away from the environmental damage and depletion of resources endemic to material production by such global conglomerates. They also ignore the possible consequences of perpetuating inhumane, normative, hegemonic, institutionalized ideologies, discourses, and inequalities in the pursuit of capital.

For Hearn, Disney's Friends for Change campaign, in particular, relies on a now-ubiquitous neoliberal "logic of self-branding" that pervades the "core assumptions about [its] interlocutors', or users', 'self'-defined political agency" (30). Evading critical awareness and political action that might otherwise contradict the capitalist motives of the conglomerate has become the norm within the context of neoliberalism. As such, the Disney Company can successfully re-brand itself as ethically and socially responsible by commodifying and depoliticizing girls' citizenship and cultural production thereby also implicating girls in the conglomerate's brand strategies and civic participation. Giving back thus became a way in which girl performers like Cyrus and Gomez—if not also Symoné as she later volunteered in corporate-sponsored activism beyond Disney—can be additionally constructed as virtuosos, in the sense that Hearn uses the term, following Paolo Virno's concept. Hearn argues that the logic of self-branding "is both foundational and perpetually reinforced by" the types of celebrity activism enacted through Disney's Project Green and similar campaigns (30). The immaterial labor of self-branding, then, is of key importance to celebrity activism and is enacted via celebrity subjectivity and what Virno calls "individual virtuosity—a capacity for improvised performance, linguistic, and communicative innovation, which inevitably requires the presence of

others" (Hearn 30). For Hearn, the immaterial labor of individual virtuosity has now become directly related to capital production. The celebrity is a form of "image-currency" embroiled in a mutually beneficial relationship with a particular cause or issue, "reinforcing synergy of promotion, leaving open the question of whether the cause or the celebrity benefits most from the bargain" (Hearn 31). It is important, however, to also consider the significance of the corporation within the activism/celebrity relationship, especially in the case of the Disney Company, which determines the cause, its celebrity spokespeople, and the labor they will do on the corporation's behalf.

Hearn argues that Project Green was a ploy "to aggregate more email addresses . . . and increase promotion for Disney . . . under the aegis of corporate social responsibility" (Hearn 34). Beyond the clear economic thrust of the movement, then, Project Green and other philanthropic campaigns can function as what John Thornton Caldwell might call "'relationship' branding" for Disney Channel. Similar to the fashion lines discussed in in Chapter three, Project Green capitalized on the affective and immaterial labors of its young, female talent and audiences, exploiting the individual virtuosity of Cyrus, Gomez, and Lovato to generate relationships with audiences as well as to perpetuate a certain performance and construction of Disney girlhood.

While the efforts of the FFC PSA stars may be categorized simply as part of the machinations of Disney Channel, by participating in Project Green Lovato, Gomez, and Cyrus each became obligated to publically address her role in the campaign. Her participation in Disney's "green" efforts thus would inform her celebrity reputation and star image. To launch "Project Green," these three stars, along with the band, the Jonas

Brothers (also Disney Channel stars at the time), recorded a promotional music video in which they perform the song, "Send It On" (Walt Disney Records 2009). The video originally aired on Disney Channel and was recorded and posted on YouTube by fans. In behind-the-scenes interviews regarding the video, some of which also aired on Disney Channel, Lovato, Gomez, and Cyrus each expresses—albeit briefly and in general, perhaps rehearsed, terms—what she finds compelling about the performance or the cause.[75]

During a "making-of" video aired on *Access Hollywood* (NBC Universal, Inc. 1996-present) to promote the "Send It On" performance, an interviewer asks Gomez to describe how she feels about performing the song. She calls the experience "very empowering."

> It's more of a power that you can't control. It's very sweet and it's got a message behind it, and I think that's what makes it really beautiful, 'cause it's not just about us wearing cute clothes and performing on a stage. It's about us getting the message . . .. (qtd. in "Disney Megastars")

Gomez's response calls to mind her feisty character Alex Russo on *Wizards of Waverly Place*. According to Gomez, Alex is "spunky, outgoing, and adventurous" and someone who gets into a lot of trouble and is "sassy" ("Interview"). Alex is also the most wryly funny, clever, and self-aware member of the Russo family. Gomez is aware of the importance placed on visibility and fashion in much of her work and appreciates that the "Send It On" performance has meaning beyond the clothes and the spotlight. Still, her

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[75] Nick and Joe Jonas repeat a call for kids to do their part by "turning off the lights when you leave a room" or "turning off the water when you're done with it," while Kevin Jonas shares how fun it is to work with all his Disney Channel friends on the video.

smiling use of vague descriptors like "sweet" and "beautiful" to describe the video's message position her well within the realm of the saccharine, precocious youth and femininity usually expressed on Disney Channel. Behind-the-scenes coverage of Lovato in that same *Access Hollywood* segment is concise and on-message. She states, "It really is important to us that we're good to the environment, so it's just a big movement that we're trying to make happen" (qtd. in "Disney Megastars"). And Cyrus, the consummate performer and songwriter among the group, shares her favorite part of recording the song: singing the lyric, "One spark starts a fire."

> I love that line because it really is true . . . It's just like, one person telling the other person telling the other person and before you know it . . . the whole . . . all these different schools and all these different kids are following along with you and it's great . . . It's something that kids can do, which is great. We're encouraging kids to do it, not saying . . . "with your parents' help or with your teachers' help," no . . . there's no one else that is needed but you and your friends, and it doesn't have to be anyone else. And, so, I think that's what's inspiring kids the most. (qtd. in "Disney Megastars")

She uses the rhetoric that drives not only Project Green, but Disney Channel as well—"getting kids involved," on their own terms, and creating a sense that they are, like the stars of the video, well-meaning individuals whose choices and actions (whatever they may be) unite them.

In addition to the environmentalist message Gomez, Cyrus, Lovato and the Jonas brothers are meant to convey, the "Send It On" performance and behind-the-scenes footage also relay the same aspirational message found elsewhere on Disney Channel—that consumer audiences should be motivated by high production values, sanitized and conventional representations of youth, and a cast of extraordinarily famous "friends," to

pledge their allegiance to one or another Disney campaign or division (here, Project Green and by extension Disney Channel's talent-driven franchises and Disney.com, where fans must go to register). These snippets of conversation, these sound bites performed by the stars between takes, may work to further humanize and quite superficially to politicize Disney Channel and its stars, presenting them as public citizens, concerned about the planet, and this performance as a form of environmental activist organizing. But as much as these stars have rehearsed and prepared, been primped and preened for the production of this music video, their performance is also, as Gomez attempts to deny or at least to diminish, "about wearing cute clothes and performing on stage" ("Disney Megastars").

An obvious difference between this performance and their usual pop music performances is that the "cute clothes" are more subdued, not covered in sequins, glitter, feathers, tulle, lace, or bright colors. The female stars appear "earthier," in brown leather boots, denim jeans, cotton tops and jackets, but no less "made-up" with carefully selected accessories, make-up, and hair extensions. As Sarah Projansky argues, girls' images historically have been used to represent social problems, and girls increasingly figure as "symbols of ideal citizenship" and "stand in for risks to society as a whole" in contemporary postfeminist media (Projansky "Mass Magazine" 42, 48). In this way, then, costuming and make-up allow the girl performers in this PSA to embody Disney's somewhat superficial environmental concerns. The video's stage and scenery, too, seem perfectly suited to the cause and include a polished hardwood stage surrounded by bright, warm yellowish stadium-style spotlights and, later, a rolling hill of green grass

upon which sits a comfy couch bearing a multi-colored patchwork quilt and throw pillows. The stars gather to pose on the couch, calling to mind the opening credits for popular sitcom *Friends* (NBC 1994-2004). Nevertheless, the song does little to explain exactly how kids can help preserve the planet—that is left to the Jonas brothers' behind-the-scenes commentary, to the girl-driven PSA discussed above, and to a series of "How-To" spots aired on Disney Channel in which a variety of Disney stars explain ways to save electricity and conserve water. Even without the glitter and tulle of other Disney performances, this video functions much in the same way promotional music videos have for Disney's other divisions: Its high production values, expert styling, and celebrity cache help boost Disney Channel viewership, Radio Disney listener-ship, iTunes music purchases, and web hits for Disney and its cause. Its focus on community-building and environmentalism makes the "Send It On" video unique from most other Disney performances, which focus on entertainment alone.

A testament to the "Send It On" video's success, the song itself was a hit when it played on Radio Disney and sold for $0.99 as a "charity single" exclusively on iTunes.com. It peaked at number twenty on the *Billboard* Hot 100, and, although the amount of gross proceeds it earned remains a mystery, Disney's 2010 "Conservation Report" states that "more than $500,000 in [net] proceeds from 'Send It On'. . . has been donated to critical conservation projects" ("Disney Conservation" 7). The money was distributed through the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund,[76] cutting out a potential

[76] The Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund (DWCF) was established in 1995, and is not a charitable organization, though it funds many other non-profits and charitable campaigns globally. Donations to the

"middle-man" in yet another effort to control where (not to mention how much) Disney revenue will be allocated. While Project Green seems to have dissipated since its launch four years ago, the Friends for Change campaign continues as an umbrella under which Disney Channel stars act as "Ambassadors" for volunteer activism such as *Jessie* star Debby Ryan's campaign to build schools in India or the "leadership academy for kids" hosted by *Shake It Up* stars Bella Thorne and Zendaya. Aside from Disney's own efforts to provide forums for its stars' activism, U.S. entertainment industry trade publications also have begun to devote greater attention to young stars' and celebrities' careers and public citizenship.

Girls' Citizenship in *Variety*'s Youth Impact Reports

Variety[77] issued its first annual Youth Impact Report (YIR) in affiliation with the magazine's first Power of Youth event in 2007, to "highlight the under-21 talents who've changed the game in the past 12 months" (Debruge A1). The reports profile the young stars of U.S. television and cinema and include interviews with the adult managers, producers, directors, and executives who work with them. The annual Power of Youth event, hosted by *Variety*, recognizes young talent who have contributed to humanitarian causes. The event benefits one or more selected charities per year, similar to *Variety's* Power of Women and Power of Comedy events. These benefits work as moments in which to recognize the accomplishments of marginalized groups, using the

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fund are not deductible as charitable contributions for U.S. tax purposes. The fund is supported by guest contributions, "pressed penny" machines, and fountains in Disney Parks and Resorts and on Disney Cruise Line, matched by contributions from The Walt Disney Company, which also covers all overhead.

[77] Variety (established in the U.S. in 1905) is a trade publication for the entertainment business, boasting "the largest entertainment news-gathering team in the world" (Variety.com 2013).

visibility of famous youth and women, among others, to publicize the magazine's own interest in social responsibility and extend its relationship to the media production community. The first two annual Power of Youth events raised $800,000 in charitable contributions, which seems a paltry sum in comparison to the combined net worth of the talent and corporate executives featured in the reports' vanity profiles and honored at the events. According to a press release looking back on the Power of Youth launch, "Two years ago, the executives at *Variety* felt it was time to unify the organization and develop a company-organized charity event. The goal was to illustrate that, despite economic hard times and union strikes, the production community had a commitment to help causes in need" (Galas). Here, the cause is not youth at all, but a need to position *Variety* executives as industry do-gooders who have survived and even managed to help others in spite of the economic recession and the strain placed on the production community by union strikes. Of course, *Variety* capitalized on regular reports regarding those same strikes that its executives "survived." Rather than simply using its considerable resources for straightforward philanthropic contributions, though, *Variety* exploits young celebrities' visibility to raise awareness of its publications and to encourage others to donate to selected charitable causes on the basis of their work with or fandom of the stars involved.

Of the stars foregrounded throughout this dissertation, Miley Cyrus, whose Disney Channel fame arguably surpassed both Symoné's and Gomez's, received the most attention in *Variety*'s Youth Impact Reports. Cyrus is profiled in the 2007 and 2008 YIRs, and she is foregrounded or mentioned in the lead stories of the 2007-2010

reports ("Minting Child Stars," by Cynthia Littleton in 2007; "Dizzying Menu of Kid Media," by Dade Hayes in 2008; Kathy Tracy's "Growing Up in Character" and Tara McNamara's "Tech-Savvy Stars Brave Virtual Space" in 2009; "Talents Tout Career Clout," by Tatiana Seigel in 2010). Cyrus' career is a point of pride for her agent and other entertainment personnel profiled in each of the five YIRs available through Variety.com, and her name appears repeatedly in descriptions of *Variety*'s annual Power of Youth charity events.

The 2007 YIR profiled Cyrus' agent Mitchell Gossett of Cunningham, Escott, Slevin, and Doherty, emphasizing his belief that

> part of his role is to show [clients] their value beyond commerce. Sure he's excited to have arranged Cyrus' sold-out 50-city concert tour, but he confides that he's equally proud "that she is donating part of every ticket sold to charity." (qtd. in McNamara "Primo" A28).

That act of philanthropy might have been considered a form of damage control for Gossett and Cyrus. Throughout 2007 and into the following year, Cyrus received much publicity regarding the millions of dollars in "take-home" pay she earned for her "Best of Both Worlds" concert tour (2007-2008), album sales (*Hannah Montana* and *Hannah Montana 2: Meet Miley Cyrus*, Walt Disney Records 2007), and the tour's three-dimensional theatrical release (*Hannah Montana & Miley Cyrus: Best of Both Worlds Concert*, Walt Disney Studios 2008). Whether Cyrus came up with the idea, took the suggestion from her agent, or was contractually obligated by Disney to donate a portion of ticket sales—or, perhaps some combination of all three—pressure mounted over the

next two years for the young, increasingly wealthy entertainers passing through the Disney franchise machine (and Hollywood in general) to "give back."

Other than that mention by Gossett and passing mentions of Cyrus' role as a Power of Youth Ambassador, Cyrus' philanthropic work was not discussed in the YIR until 2009. In 2009—the same year Disney launched Friends for Change: Project Green and within one year of Cyrus' having been named "Hollywood's richest kid" by *People* magazine (May 2008)—the annual YIR began to address celebrity-brand activism, by incorporating a "causes" section in its talent profiles to recognize, in print, young celebrities' charitable concerns. "Giving back" through celebrity-brand activism and participation in Disney's corporate citizenship initiatives, such as Project Green, was thus immediately taken up by the industry's leading trade publication as another way to promote and exploit Hollywood's young talent. Young stars who had been recognized and rewarded by *Variety* at Power of Youth charity events since 2007, now gained recognition for their philanthropic efforts also in *Variety*'s youth-focused annual reports. Having been publically honored at *Variety*'s first Power of Youth event, as well as in the YIRs that followed, Miley Cyrus in particular has been invoked, then, beyond the profitability of her celebrity brand as also a leader in celebrity-brand activism.

In addition to a new focus on celebrity youth activism and philanthropy, the YIRs also offered articles about celebrity youth social media participation and media production initiatives, foregrounding Cyrus in 2009 and 2010. In the 2010 YIR, Cyrus' newly launched film producing career is one focal point for Tatiana Seigel's article, "Talents Tout Career Clout" (A1, A39). At the time, Cyrus was "one of a handful of

stars [who had] managed to garner a greenlight for their producing efforts" (Siegel A39). Her Hope Town Entertainment firm was producing the "$15 million sorority comedy *So Undercover*," which has since been released straight to video in the U.S. (Millennium Entertainment 2012) and theatrically in several non-U.S. markets (Seigel A39). Although, as I argue in the sections below, Gomez and Symoné have each been constructed in popular discourse as business moguls, in the YIR Cyrus is one of just a few other stars venturing to produce films. Elsewhere, Cyrus is constructed as a musician and actor, but rarely if ever as a media producer or entertainment mogul.

One of two cover articles in the 2009 YIR to mention Cyrus discusses the benefits and pitfalls of celebrity social media use (McNamara "Tech-Savvy" A1, A26). Jason Gluck, President of Cyrus' social network for fans, (now-defunct) Mileyworld.com, explains that the immediacy and availability of information within networks like Twitter and MySpace is a necessary danger for stars like Cyrus. "She is put at risk. That's just the cost of being the biggest star in the world" (qtd. in McNamara "Tech-Savvy" A26). The "solution" to the problem of privacy has been the creation of a "Children's Online Privacy Protection Act [COPPA]-compliant social networking site that gives its 2 million unique visitors exclusive content" (McNamara "Tech-Savvy" A26). Yet, by-passing that "private" network, Cyrus was also an active Twitter user with 2 million followers when the Mileyworld.com fan network was in full force. Although "maintaining an active new media presence is vital to an established performer like Miley Cyrus," she reportedly canceled her Twitter account in 2009 at the request of her boyfriend and *Last Song* co-star Liam Hemsworth (Montgomery). Fan blog,

Disneydreaming.com, also reveals, however, that Cyrus had been "pretty upset on Twitter about how blogs are spreading rumors about her" ("Miley Cyrus Deletes"). The YIR article offers Cyrus up as the "unwitting poster child for how new media can be useful as well as abused"—a cautionary tale for young stars who update their own social media feeds and the managers and publicists who "coach their underage clients about how to protect themselves online" (McNamara "Tech-Savvy" A26).

> Suggestive photos popping up on MySpace and Twitter, a YouTube video that was perceived to be making fun of other Disney Channel stars, and personal information on Twitter and blogs that become fodder for gossip mavens likely contributed to Cyrus being voted "Worst Celeb Influence" by AOL's tween site JSYK.com. (McNamara "Tech-Savvy" A26)

The "at-risk" discourse increasingly common in popular press regarding girls, then, is invoked here in reference to the supposed dangers of young female celebrity visibility and the moral panic that so easily erupts as a result. As I will continue to demonstrate in the sections that follow, such invocations of the teen girl celebrity as public citizen can be problematic, the YIR's increased attention to celebrity girls' activism and philanthropy might also suggest the progressive potential both of girls' heightened visibility and of the increasing importance of corporate responsibility, albeit in a neoliberal context.

Raven-Symoné and Selena Gomez are also mentioned to varying degrees in *Variety*'s Youth Impact Reports, among the many other Disney and non-Disney performers featured in their pages. Perhaps because *That's So Raven* ended its original run on Disney Channel the same year *Variety* began publishing these reports (2007), Raven-Symoné is not profiled in any of the issues, all of which tend to focus on up-and-

coming stars. Neither her rise to fame nor her charitable work is discussed there. Still, *That's So Raven* is referenced in both the 2009 and 2010 reports in profiles of others, namely David Henrie. (He first appeared on *Raven* and went on to play Justin Russo in *Wizards of Waverly Place*.) A 2007 profile of talent agent Cindy Osbrink reveals Raven-Symoné is one of her "role models," because she was "naturally talented and confident" (Idelson A29). Here and elsewhere, Symoné and her series are respectively relegated to the past. While in that same report, chairman of the Disney Music Group, Bob Cavallo, plugs Symoné's upcoming album after claiming *Hannah Montana*/Miley Cyrus as his "[r]ecent break-through" (Sandler A24). Symoné's name does not appear in the 2008 or 2011 reports, but the lead article in the 2009 YIR, titled "Growing Up in Character," mentions her in reference to the fashion line she created with Disney Consumer Products, as an example of the ways in which "Disney encourages and facilitates its talent to pursue other creative avenues" (Tracy A24). Although it is not the only typographical error to be found in the publication, the mis-spelling of her name as "Raven Simone" in that article may indicate her lack of relevance to *Variety*, or the YIR readership. Thus, in the final year of her leading role on Disney Channel and on the single occasion in which she is mentioned after that, Symoné is constructed in *Variety*'s Youth Impact Reports as a nearly-forgotten precursor to the franchise expansion that made Cyrus immensely famous and would continue to deliver for other Disney performers in the years to come.

Selena Gomez also benefits from the work Symoné did with Disney Channel and Disney Consumer Products before her. In a section titled "Channeling Talent" in the

2008 YIR, Gomez is featured as "Disney's New 'It' Girl" (Blair A16). The column briefly explains her "discovery"—in an audition as part of a routine nationwide casting tour—and presents her as the inspiration for her *Wizards of Waverly Place* character, Alex Russo, similar to the way in which Miley Cyrus and Raven-Symoné are each said to have inspired their Disney Channel characters (Blair A16).[78] Gomez is profiled briefly in the 2007 YIR, discussing her Disney auditions (Boyd A46). She is mentioned in passing in the 2009 and 2011 reports, usually to legitimate interviews with other actors with whom she has worked and with adult executives like casting director Judy Taylor who "discovered" her and manager Nick Styne at CAA, the agency that represents her, as well as in reference to her films' box office performance each year.

Previous issues of the YIR had not focused on celebrities' charitable work, but the 2009 issue includes a photo of Gomez painting a mural for St Jude Children's Hospital at the 2008 Power of Youth event. And in the 2010 YIR, Gomez is featured in a reprisal of her mention in the 2008 YIR, this one focusing on her "transformation from *Wizards of Waverly Place* starlet to pop star" (Barker A27). This 2010 YIR article also includes among her "causes" being "a UNICEF spokeswoman since 2008" (Barker A27). Gomez is recognized in these reports as a formidable force for Disney Channel, as well as a potential pop superstar, and her charitable work at Power of Youth events and through Disney's partnership with UNICEF are necessary, if fleeting, mentions in the era of corporate citizenship. The following sections detail the work of Disney stars,

[78] All three characters existed in some sense before the stars were attached to their series, but each is described at some point (beyond the pages of the YIR) as having influenced the characters' interests and personality traits, if not also their names.

Symoné, Cyrus, and Gomez, as celebrity business moguls and public citizens in order to explore how they have negotiated these adult- and male-dominated realms of public life as part of their own self-branding practice(s).

SHARING THE WEALTH: THE CELEBRITY GIRL AS PUBLIC CITIZEN

For Symoné, Cyrus, and Gomez, out-growing Disney Channel has meant the pursuit of music careers, business investments, film and television production, and taking sexually sophisticated acting roles. Their fame also has required each to incorporate or adapt the values associated with her "Disneyfied" image, including the values of certain forms of citizenship and corporate social responsibility with which each has become associated through her role in the philanthropy and commodity activism of the conglomerate. Conveniently, these girls have trained within a very successful marketing machine, which provides a model—even if only through cautionary tales of Disney stars who have gone before them, such as Lindsay Lohan or Britney Spears—for how to navigate the contemporary entertainment marketplace, public visibility, and public citizenship. And, over the course of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the conglomerate nurturing their fame has generated diversified and synergistic strategies, specifically in order to take advantage of contemporary girls' "imagined capacity . . . as economic agents and their desires to be political agents," the combination of which "makes for rich marketing material" (Harris *Future* 89).

Harris defines contemporary public citizenship for children and youth as "self-actualizing citizenship"—a product of Western neoliberal individualization, which demands "self-invention, consumption, and engagement in [easily de-politicized]

mainstream political and civic activities" ("Citizenship Stories" 149). In light of the growing interest in young people's participatory citizenship since the 1990s, she finds that

> [m]iddle-class, White young women, for instance, have become the exemplars of new self-crafted individualist citizens who use spending power and self-belief to make a successful place for themselves in the new economy and social order. (Harris "Citizenship Stories" 147)

Hearn argues that some youth have, thus, become "celebrity-brand activists" who provide "models of virtuostic profitability" (Hearn 30). Young celebrities like Gomez, Symoné, and Cyrus (among many others), then, have become central to commodity activism and to "the post-Fordist industrial model of immaterial labor" (Hearn 30). Girls have typically not figured within the discourse of civic responsibility, virtuosity, or profitability, instead having been marginalized, their tastes and talents denigrated or de-privileged in the face of masculinist and patriarchal cultural hierarchies. But in this context, as celebrity-brand activists and "can-do citizens," they may be considered to be virtuosos in self-branding and in generating capital—cultural, social, and financial (Harris "Citizenship Stories" 147; Hearn). Each of the three Disney celebrity-brand activists discussed below expresses her relationship to activism, citizenship, and branding in different ways, navigating the complex of discursive, if not institutional and systemic, constraints and freedoms that frame contemporary girlhood.

Raven-Symoné: Targeting the "At-Risk" Girl for Merck

In interviews and appearances since at least 2005 (when she was 20 years old), Raven-Symoné has repeatedly stated that she "isn't in this business to make money," but

that she wants to help others (Hiltbrand "So very"). At one point, she described wanting to create

> an entertainment company that promotes self-respect in young people, especially girls, via TV, music, publications, content for mobile and broadband . . . Basically, I want to do good, touch as many people as I can, and change lives for the better. (qtd. in "Upfront & Centered")

Toward that goal, Symoné has been a spokesperson for an initiative introduced by Merck in 2012 called "Plan It Forward" (PIF). Merck[79] is one of the world's largest corporations specializing in the development, manufacture, and sale of pharmaceutical products. The single web page devoted to "Plan It Forward" at Merck.com describes the initiative's mission to "[encourage] young adult women to consider how an unplanned pregnancy could impact her journey," and then it redirects readers to the apparently now-defunct PIF section of HerCampus.com ("Plan It Forward").[80] Although the PIF content is no longer publically accessible on HerCampus.com, Merck's founding of PIF was also noted on the "She's the First" (STF) website, accompanied by a PIF logo and photo of Raven-Symoné. As part of the PIF launch, Merck donated $25,000 of its $48billion in revenue to fund a "She's the First" grant project (United States Securities & Exchange). STF founder Tammy Tibbetts describes "Plan It Forward" and why the partnership between the two initiatives is "a natural fit."

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[79] Merck was established in Germany in 1668 and moved to the U.S. in 1891.

[80] A simple search for PIF on the HerCampus web site reveals PIF-specific content, but attempting to access it on 25 April 2013 resulted in a warning: "Access denied." From the "About" section of HerCampus.com: "Her Campus is the #1 online community for college women. Written entirely by the nation's top college journalists – with 3,000+ contributors and counting – HerCampus.com features national content on Style, Health, Love, Life, and Career supplemented by local content from 200+ campus chapters across the country."

> She's the First is planning it forward right along with you! This year, our ambitious goal is to raise $157,000 for girls' sponsorships in the developing world. We do this by working side-by-side with students in the U.S., who rise as strong, confident leaders through our campus network, our grassroots event campaigns (like those famous cupcake bake sales and poetry nights), and we're now even beginning to pilot after-school activities with high schools in the underserved areas near our campus chapters. (Tibbetts)

STF thus benefits from this—arguably relatively small—donation from Merck and in return promotes Merck's PIF campaign and Raven-Symoné, whose *Cosby Show* roots Tibbetts also mentions.

Merck's mission for "Plan It Forward" and its partnership with "She's the First," mesh well with Symoné's own interest in empowering young women.

> I believe that young adult women today can accomplish anything they put their minds to, but having a plan in place can be important in helping those dreams become a reality. I've been very fortunate to have had a successful career for many years, but it's more than luck that's gotten me here today. (qtd. in "Plan It Forward")

Although there has been little publicity regarding PIF since Raven-Symoné's last press junket promoting her starring role in *Sister Act* on Broadway, which closed in August 2012, her image and name continue to constitute the points of possible identification through which Merck can engage girls and young women in its bids for responsible corporate citizenship.

When Symoné did publicize her affiliation with the campaign, she seldom, if ever, mentioned its specific aim to help girls avoid unwanted pregnancies. In fact, when asked by one journalist for her thoughts on young women's increasing involvement in sexual relationships, Symoné expressed discomfort, saying:

> Well, that's something that I think you talk to your parents about . . . But I think

> that going to this website and understanding that if you have a plan, or have a plan to have a family later in life and find other ways of dealing with contraception early, that's what this website does. But it's kind of difficult for me to talk about that topic because it is so personal. (qtd. in Williams)

Symoné avoids the question by referring readers to the Merck website to help them plan their lives, but she does manage to mention contraception. Contraception, it seems, is the key to Merck's vested interest in "empowering" young women. As of 2012, Merck manufactures more than half a dozen different pharmaceutical contraceptives and markets them globally. Symoné's discomfort at speaking publically about sex and family planning might make her an unlikely spokesperson for such a campaign. But she has been an exemplary "can-do" girl—one who claims she consults her mother on the appropriateness of her attire, stays home to avoid paparazzi, public scrutiny and scandal, and upholds accepted myths of equal opportunity and the importance of hard work and determination. She also may appear to be a potentially powerful touch-point for young women typically deemed "at-risk"—young women who look, in some sense, "just like her," because they are young women of color and thus ostensibly not American or Western. Symoné may be Merck's ideal spokesperson and role model for this global health initiative, then, because she is a publically visible, successful, not controversial, young Black woman.

Yet few girls or young women have experienced the privilege that Raven-Symoné has—especially in developing countries—and few have the time or money or cultural capital to cultivate the polished and posh look of celebrity, making the resemblance a bit thin between Symoné and the girls or young women Merck seems to

want to address. Harris and others have found that socio-economic class and race frequently correlate to the level of education and career success achieved by young women.

> Those overachieving schoolgirls and new professionals who are represented simply as the "next generation of young women" are predominantly middle class and of the cultural majority. Their less-privileged counterparts are subject to the same discourses about flexibility, choice, and opportunity, and the same circumstances of uncertainty and flux, but they reap few of the economic rewards. In other words, the can-dos are constructed as a mainstream cohort, but in fact they constitute a class elite. (Harris *Future* 44)

In a neoliberal context, the structural disadvantages of poverty and race-based marginalization, which together create the basis for categorizing girls as "at-risk," can become "recast as poor personal choices, laziness, and incompetent family practices" (Harris *Future* 25). "'Successful girlness' has become the revitalizing force in marketing," and Raven-Symoné is just one example of the marketing of can-do celebrity femininity to set right young women who might lose their way (Harris *Future* 21). Merck has made her a representative of successful black girlhood and a beacon for potentially "at-risk" young women.

In her personal appearances, candid interviews, and through her work with PIF, as well as with Dove's Self-Esteem Workshop Tour,[81] Raven-Symoné attempts to subvert celebrity expectations by revealing the work of fame and body maintenance,

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[81] Dove, a major manufacturer of beauty products, initiated the Movement for Self-Esteem to provide "women everywhere" with the "tools to take action and inspire each other and the girls in their lives" (http://www.dove.us/social-mission/our-vision/). When accessed on 30 April 2013, the "Tips, Topics, & Tools" section of the Dove website included quizzes and games to enable visitors to "Learn the Truth about Your Body Wash." The "Social Mission" section of the site offers a downloadable "Self-Esteem Discussion Guide: For Mothers of Girls Ages 11-16," videos of Dove workshops and girls' stories about self-esteem struggles, and a space called "Share Your Story" in which visitors can type comments that will appear on the Dove FaceBook page.

especially for Black women and girls. In at least three separate appearances on *The Wendy Williams Show*, for instance, Symoné engages in conversations about her appearance—especially hair maintenance. In a 2010 episode, Symoné "sets the record straight" about her hair, saying, "I was wearing weaves my whole entire life. My hair's always been short, so don't think I was copying Rihanna or nothin' . . . I just had the guts to take off the weave and give it a style." Williams compliments her hair and then they discuss Symoné's appearance in the documentary, *Good Hair* (dir. Chris Rock 2009), in which she demonstrates how loose her weave is. In another appearance, In a later episode, Symoné explains to Williams that she "put myself together [today], with the help of all of my make-up artists and hair and clothes" (*The Wendy Williams Show* 2012). When Williams points out "but you gave all the direction," Symoné proudly confirms it. Soon after that exchange, she pulls a rolled-up drawing out of her hair, as Williams comments that, "I know that you have beautiful Raven hair, but I also know that you're my wig sister" (*The Wendy Williams Show* 2012). Symoné gestures as if to clip her hair back into place and says, "and click, and click," and the audience erupts in applause and laughter. Later in the interview, after complimenting Williams' wig, Symoné shares that "most of the time I like to wear my normal hair, 'cause nobody knows what it looks like, and I can get around without people knowing who I am." Symoné calls attention to the apparatus of femininity by consistently describing her hair (and other folks' hair) as "real" or a wig or a weave. And she uses her hair on different occasions either to get attention or to avoid public scrutiny.

Another of Symoné's strategies for subverting dominant expectations for female

celebrity includes constructing an image that is inflected by a "no-nonsense" attitude, familiarity of tone, and unabashed expression of "authentic" Blackness. Toward that end, she consistently refers to her "realness" by deconstructing her image as an intensive body project, by describing a mundane, home-bound, sweat-pants-wearing personal life, and by exhibiting a familiarity and informality with her interviewers and audiences—frequently African-American women. This level of familiarity can create an "insider" sensibility common in Black popular media. That sense of insider-ness coupled with a level of neoliberal anti-intellectualism can contribute to a sense of mediocrity and may detract from Symoné's "can-do" image. Beretta E. Smith-Shomade argues that the "confluence of black excellence and simultaneous mediocrity" plays out across African-American bodies in black popular culture as evidence of "the paradoxes inherent in mainstream, capitalist representation" (Smith-Shomade 93). Elsewhere, Symoné shares her purposeful lack of goals "in the career field right now," and when asked if she has been the "first" woman to do something in her family, rather than refer to one of her many accomplishments, she reveals that she was the first *not* to go to college, "but I'm going to make sure that I go, eventually" (qtd. in Williams). Her easy dismissal of questions about her own achievements and the future of her entertainment career, along with her inability to take a political stance, to clearly articulate her role in "Plan It Forward," or what Merck's website can do, or how the initiative might "empower" young women to avoid pregnancy, might also tarnish Symoné's brilliant "can-do" record.

Symoné relies on a distinction between self-involvement and charity to construct

herself as more "authentic" than other celebrities who are just in the business to make money and more "in-the-know" than other young women whose lives are "just about the hair color and the clothes" (qtd. in Williams). Yet the simple dichotomy between making or spending money and helping others does not hold up for many celebrities who have embraced and publicized their strategic incorporation of such altruism into their very profitable, streamlined, and expansive brands. In fact, the dichotomy does not hold up for Raven-Symoné either, since she also participates in the fetishization of her own consumption. In other forums,[82] she speaks about her collection of couture clothing and on-going interest in fashion and love of expensive shoes, her obsession with luxury vehicles, and frequent and labor-intensive changes in her hairstyle. Her attempts to "lay bare" the apparatus of Black female celebrity and, by extension, the expectations of Black femininity in general, also work, then, to showcase the expense, time, and labor that she is able to spend on her hair and skin and apparel and make-up. Although, it would be negligent to suggest that such body maintenance and presentation are straightforward, personal "choices." Public visibility facilitates idealized expectations that mark bodies in particular ways. Ultimately, Symoné embraces her wealth and fame, but attempts to deny her position in celebrity culture to convey an authenticity that will speak to girls and young women. Following Dyer's assessment of stardom, Symoné's efforts at creating an "authentic" celebrity brand illustrates the way in which stars are discursively constructed as both ordinary and extraordinary (*Stars*). Symoné's recent celebrity-brand activism with Merck may, thus, help her perpetuate her image as a "can-

[82] See "Raven Symoné," "Raven Symoné & Others," and "*The Wendy Williams Show*."

do" girl and a leader among a specifically gendered, classed, and perhaps raced, demographic, if not as a mainstream "model of virtuostic profitability" (Hearn 30).

Miley Cyrus: From Saving the Children to Saving the Brand

Since moving beyond Disney Channel after the *Hannah Montana* finale aired in 2011, Cyrus' philanthropy and charity work has waned—or, at least, it has not been as visible as the Disney machine had made it. Instead, the entertainment trade and gossip press have foregrounded her romantic life, recording career, concert tours, film roles, and television guest spots. Perhaps because of her discursive construction as potentially the next fallen Disney star a la Britney Spears or Lindsay Lohan, and/or because of her own self-branding as having grown out of her Disney image, critics, journalists, and bloggers alike have preferred to focus on Cyrus' body maintenance and style, leisure activities, and media projects that contradict her supposed Disney innocence. References to her activism are nowhere to be found on the most current version of her official website (MileyCyrus.com), for instance. Other fan sites, such as MileyCyrus.bz, however, have catalogued her philanthropic efforts in some detail, incorporating links for fans to learn more about certain organizations and to support them.

Cyrus partnered with Youth Service America (YSA) in 2009 (the same organization offering grants as part of Disney's Friends for Change project) to found a charity called GetUrGoodOn.org. GetUrGoodOn.org is an online network to help fans connect with each other and locate volunteer opportunities. The network still functions, though with apparently less involvement from Cyrus than YSA volunteers and staff. Images of Cyrus in 2009 continue to decorate the site, perhaps as a way of speaking to

younger fans or fans who would more easily relate to her Hannah Montana days than her current, punked-out trendy pop diva image (discussed further below).

The list of other organizations Cyrus has supported since 2006 is long and includes the Starkey Hearing Foundation, Blessings in a Backpack, the Make-A-Wish Foundation, City of Hope, Amnesty International, To Write Love on Her Arms, Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, Feeding America, Stand Up To Cancer, Clothes Off Our Back, the J/P Haitian Relief Organization, Entertainment Industry Foundation, Grammy Foundation, Habitat for Humanity, Heroes In Heels, MusiCares, Music For Relief, Musicians On Call, Red Cross, and St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. Children and youth are a common thread within Cyrus' many charitable causes. She contributes to several organizations that support medical research into childhood illnesses and which donate food, school supplies, and clothing to children in need. While environmental causes are barely represented in Cyrus' extensive list of causes, her interest in helping children allows her to relate to her young audience as a role model and savior of sorts while it also aligns with Disney's own interest in children's charities, like the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which I discuss further below in relation to Selena Gomez.[83] Cyrus has been recognized with awards from several of the above organizations as recently as in 2012, and she participated in a Feeding America campaign PSA in 2012 as well. Certainly, she remains supportive of a variety of charitable causes and groups, though publicity about such activism has been

[83] UNICEF is an international non-profit organization dedicated to improving children's lives 'by providing health care and immunizations, clean water and sanitation, nutrition, education, emergency relief and more" (unicefusa.org/about 2013).

minimal over the past couple of years relative to reports about her excursions to Pilates classes, appearance on *Two and a Half Men* (CBS 2003-present), changing hair style, and sightings with famous fiancé Liam Hemsworth (Cyrus' co-star in *The Last Song*, 2010).

Since exiting Disney Channel in 2011, Cyrus has attempted to simultaneously retain the loyalty of her fans and to extend her image beyond the franchise. In her cover interview for the March 2011 issue of *Marie Claire* magazine, she shared two goals for the coming year: "to go to work as a missionary in Indonesia and build wells and bring water to people who need it . . . and to make more comedies" (Cutter 284). Here, she manages to connect the two goals, which seem contradictory, one being about giving one's own time and strength to help ensure others have what they need to live and the other being the pursuit of fame and fortune and the continuation of her career in commercial entertainment. Performing to entertain audiences, however, can also be understood as a form of giving that can better the lives of others. She comments, "I honestly can't sleep at night because I get so excited about doing good things for the world," and later, in reference to physical comedy, "there's no better feeling in the world than making someone smile" (Cutter 284). Although she has yet to schedule that missionary trip to Indonesia, Cyrus did volunteer at least twice in Haiti—in March and October 2011—on behalf of the Starkey Hearing Foundation, which distributes hearing aids and support to deaf children internationally. Her easy combination of international charity with the pursuit of film comedy roles—ostensibly in mainstream Hollywood productions—in order to help others and make them smile, may belie the industry

pressures to engage in charitable work and photo ops globally, while also suggesting the wide range of such opportunities (or aspirations) available to someone so famous internationally and with such a wealth of time and resources to share.

Two years later, Cyrus was interviewed by *Cosmopolitan* and featured on the cover of the March 2013 issue. The impetus for the interview appeared to be the immanent release of her "hugely anticipated" new album from RCA Records, whose title was not revealed (Buchanan 73). Rather than discuss her charity work, the new album as well as concerns about her shifting star image and her relationship with Hemsworth all pulled focus. Here, then, Cyrus is constructed (and works to construct herself) in opposition to her Disney Channel/*Hannah Montana* role. Promoting her non-Disney, rocker image may leave little space or time for discussions of philanthropy, but neither did her interviewer venture to ask any questions that might prompt such discussions. In this recent interview, Cyrus seems dedicated, in a way she had not been previously, to reproducing the Hannah Montana/Miley Cyrus dichotomy.

Cyrus—along with *Cosmo* and other media outlets—continues to construct herself in opposition to her Disney Channel role in efforts to inflect her star image with a punk rock "bad girl" edge. For example, the cover of the March issue features *Cosmo*'s usual litany of sex tips, relationship rules, beauty "musts," and workout mandates, all highlighted by a pink backdrop and fuchsia text. Her headline reads: "It's Miley, B*tches . . . 'I've never faked anything.'" Her quote there, in the *Cosmo* context, could have a sexual connotation, but it is pulled from the part of her interview in which she discusses her struggles with negative publicity and leaked photos. She proclaims,

> Some of the worst things that have happened in my career, like things getting leaked, have actually been what's best for me, because people knew when I was on that show that I was really growing up. I never faked anything. (qtd. in Buchanan 73)

The two "awesome bonus covers," wedged between advertisements for L'oreal Paris beauty products and Gap clothing, further emphasize Cyrus' efforts to distinguish herself from her Disney past. One features Cyrus, posed against a purple backdrop wearing a tailored black suit jacket, hands on hips and snarling, with the quote, "I'm just not a girlie girl" scripted across it. The second finds her surrounded by pink, bent over at the waist, pulling her pant-legs up over her knees, mouth open in a surprised grin, augmented by the following quote: "I never played the Disney game of smiling and being a princess." Here, the "Disney game," princess culture, and being "a girlie girl" become the measure in opposition to which Cyrus (and *Cosmopolitan*) currently envisions herself. "Former child stars frequently find themselves in the crosshairs of public condemnation," and "young female stars who fail to exhibit enough public contrition . . . are likely to come under especially intense scrutiny" (Sternheimer 235). Cyrus has had her fair share of public scrutiny over the past several years, yet here she attempts to use public judgments in her favor—to control perceptions of her as she defines herself against type (i.e., Hannah Montana).

Although individualism and visibility have been central to postfeminist identification and significant functions of the franchise that made her so rich and famous, Cyrus stakes a claim to her individuality by attempting to position herself as definitively different from Hannah Montana. Image control and personal concerns seem

to have displaced entirely Cyrus' goal of "helping the world," whereas she had previously used her altruistic hopes and humanitarian actions in the service of self-promotion. The interview that ensues in *Cosmo*'s March issue focuses on her relationship with her famous fiancé and the potential image confusion that may be provoked by the recent release of the comedy *So Undercover* (2012) and that of her new album. In fact, there is no mention of her charity work or humanitarian efforts or even other career goals within the interview, except for her claim that she's "definitely putting acting on the back burner" (qtd. in Buchanan 74). It should be noted that this interview was not as extensive as the previous *Marie Claire* interview, and the heteronormative romantic and sexual focus of *Cosmopolitan* magazine comes to bear on the content and focal points of its celebrity interviews. Still, Cyrus' conviction to demonstrating her non-girlie edge with the new album, as well as through the statements above and the accompanying provocative poses, language, and appearance, including multiple references to her shaved and bleached hair, could be undermined by an awareness of the amount of time, money, and effort spent to maintain her toned and slender frame and her shiny, colored coif, evident in the images produced here and elsewhere. Her engagement in material consumption and the bodywork that perpetuates normative ideals of femininity and youth here—short hair or not—are not necessarily subversive acts. Additionally, the focus on her romantic relationship in frequent coverage by gossip publications, complete with reference to her "Disney princess engagement ring," may instead demonstrate, *through* her, the ongoing connections between dominant ideologies

of contemporary femininity and Disney discourse, including for talent as they move beyond Disney Channel (Gornstein).

CELEBRITY SELF-BRANDING AND THE GIRL AS MOGUL

Above, I have discussed Raven-Symoné's and Miley Cyrus' philanthropic and activist efforts in relation to Disney's focus on environmental causes and charities devoted to protecting and supporting children. In addition, I have explored Cyrus' use of social media in relation to her celebrity-brand. Although she has been involved in film production via her firm Hope Town Entertainment since 2009,[84] Cyrus does not prove to be a particularly useful case study in the sections that follow. She has not been addressed by popular media and trade publications as a media producer or entrepreneur to the degree Symoné and Gomez have been. The discussions below instead foreground Symoné's and Gomez's self-branding practices and rhetoric and explore the ways in which each of them has been constructed in popular media as a business mogul and media producer.

Selena Gomez: Crowd-Sourcing Moguldom

While Symoné continues to partner with Disney on media projects, Cyrus works to distance herself from her "girlie" Disney past and, like Cyrus', Selena Gomez's star image also remains in flux, bound by conventional discourses of girlhood that set up "the fixity of womanhood" as the singular, inevitable transformation for girls (Driscoll

[84] In 2009 while shooting *The Last Song*, Cyrus was reportedly in talks to star in two adaptations of young adult novels, *Wake* (part of a trilogy by Lisa McCann to be co-produced by MTV Films) and *Wings* (based on a novel by Aprilynne Pike, the rights to which Disney acquired in 2009), and in 2011, after starring in a music video for the Rock Mafia song "The Big Bang," she was being considered to star in a film of the same name. She has since starred in *LOL* (dir. Lisa Azuelos, 2012) and in *So Undercover* (dir. Tom Vaughan, 2012), which has been Hope Town's only credit to date.

47). Gomez has effectively navigated her move beyond Disney Channel by espousing rhetoric that depicts the transition as part of the process of growing up and part of her changing brand. When interviewers turn to her role as media producer through her music, performing in films, and her continued self-promotion via social media, Gomez's labors are woven into a larger celebrity narrative alongside both her break from wholesome Disney texts into more adult-oriented fare and her continued success *via* her Disney-produced and Disney-related texts and product lines for girls. Rarely referring to her July Moon film production company (discussed more below) or to herself as a *producer* of media, Gomez does reveal in interviews an awareness of how her creative labor and celebrity visibility can influence her audience, and she actively perpetuates the "growing up/out-growing Disney" discourse circulating around her and other young female talent. Notably, this discourse, produced by the stars, as well as by other Disney personnel, frequently ignores the fact that audiences are "growing up" too. Instead, for Disney personnel and performers, the audience is constructed as a static demographic category.

In a 2010 interview, Gomez launched the warning, "There's a transition coming. I'm just not there yet" (qtd. in Moore "Selena" 1). Just one year later, in 2011 a columnist writes that

> In explaining the difficulty of coming to terms with her choice [to move away from TV and music toward film], Gomez sounds like the seasoned veteran that she is. "It is awkward," she says. "You're trying to keep that fan base that has been so loyal to you because they're the ones that have been with you through everything. But, at the same time, you're trying to expand your audience and explore new things. You're growing up." (Freedman)

The writer continues, "And then there are times when [Gomez] still sounds very much like a 19-year-old. [Like when she says] 'I'm trying to figure out who I am. I'm exploring that part of myself, too'" (Freedman). Gomez continues to use the rhetoric of "growing up" simultaneously as a way to situate herself as a *girl*, as well as to warn the young fans who identify with her that she is changing and will eventually (somehow) "turn into a woman" and inevitably move away from texts and performances geared toward girls. In fact, she already has done so. Actively embracing her own construction as still a girl and "not yet a woman" demands a certain discursive flexibility and allows Gomez to take strategic ownership of her shifting celebrity brand.

In an effort to control the means of representation and the trajectory of her stardom, as well as to invest in the business of media production, Gomez formed July Moon Productions, Inc. (Santa Monica, California) in 2008 with her mother Amanda Teefy. The company established a partnership with XYZ Films,[85] which had recently contracted with publisher Time, Inc.[86] for access to its extensive library. At 16, Gomez had a sort of "first-look" studio deal that allowed her (and/or Teefy) to choose possible projects to option for film production from Time's holdings, which include *Time*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Fortune*, and *Life* magazines. July Moon is meant to produce starring roles for Gomez and other talent managed by another of XYZ's partners, the Collective (Beverly Hills, California 2005). Although it has yet to complete a film project, the company reportedly has two or more scripts in development. A brief press release

[85] Established in Marina del Rey, California, 2008.
[86] Founded in 1922 in New York City, Time, Inc. has since merged with Warner Bros. (in 1990), making Time, Inc. a subsidiary of parent company Time Warner.

reporting the formation of July Moon circulated and was reproduced by several trades and entertainment blogs at the time, but there has been little publicity about the company or Gomez's work there since 2008. It remains to be seen how its films will fare and what roles Gomez will take on, but clearly she has a vested interest in media production and has engaged in the business of making films throughout her teens.

In addition to venturing into film production to help solidify her acting career and celebrity brand, Gomez has embraced her role as an ambassador to children in developing nations as a spokesperson for UNICEF. As a result of Disney's long-standing relationship with UNICEF and Gomez's interest in developing, perhaps, her own sort of relationship branding strategy, she became a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador—the youngest ever—in 2009. Gomez traveled to Ghana for her first field mission in September of that year. Discussing her affiliation with UNICEF, Gomez explains the educational aspects of the partnership and her interest in being a responsible role model for kids who might look up to her.

> My key demographic is maybe a younger generation than my age, so it's nice to be able to lend my voice to that generation and educate them on issues going on around the world. It's good for me to be able to be a part of something like that too, to educate myself. (qtd. in Naughton 8)

Her official website features a section devoted to her charity work, including links to UNICEF to find out "How you can help" as well as images of her with young children in Ghana. She continues to place importance on her citizenship efforts, and through UNICEF that aspect of her career has been made visible internationally. Similar to Symoné's function as a role model for potentially at-risk Black girls in the U.S. and to

Miley's construction as a savior of America's ill and underserved children, then, Gomez, too, can be understood as a sort of savior of dark-skinned children in Ghana and wherever those UNIFEC images of her might circulate.

While her appearances on behalf of UNICEF may enhance her image and keep her relevant in the sphere of celebrity-brand activism, Gomez's uses of social media have also been central to the development of her brand. P.D. Marshall argues that celebrities use social media to maintain fan following and to "actively play between different intercommunicative registers" by sharing private communication publicly (Marshall 43). Bypassing traditional media outlets, Selena Gomez has, from early in her career, used interpersonal communication via public social media sites to produce and maintain the image that has become her celebrity brand. It seems Gomez has surpassed most celebrities at collecting Facebook fans and Twitter followers,[87] and she used her Facebook profile—which currently describes her as "Actor/Director"—to recruit fans' assistance in the development of her first fragrance.

Earlier, in 2008, she and friend and fellow Disney actor-singer Demi Lovato created and shared videos on YouTube.com, in which they joked with each other, thanked fans for sending them gifts, and gave "shout outs" to fans by saying their names on camera. The video series is listed in the Internet Movie Database (IMDB.com) as a TV show called *The Demi and Selena Show*, with Demi Lovato and Selena Gomez as its stars and directors. The DIY aesthetic of the videos can make them feel like invitations

[87] The *Chicago Tribune* lists Gomez as number 25 in an un-dated online list of the top 50 celebrities with the most FaceBook fans. The *International Business Times* ranks her at 7th in number of Twitter followers (over 12million) and FaceBook fans (32million) in 2012. As of April 2013, Gomez has over 42million FaceBook fans and nearly 15million Twitter followers.

into these friends' private space and their relationship. Banet-Weiser argues in her study of girls' self-promotion on YouTube that "because of the site's dynamic capacity for individual public performances and viewers' comments and feedback, it has become an ideal space to craft a self-brand" ("Branding" 278). She explains, "one of the most desirable features of the site is that users can bypass the control of media gatekeepers by producing and distributing their own media images" (Banet-Weiser "Branding" 282). Banet-Weiser's study focuses on "ordinary" girls, as opposed to the celebrity girls discussed here, who may be beholden to the Disney Company while under contract with its various divisions. Gomez and Lovato's affiliations with the Disney Company may come to bear on how they present themselves online and on what they share. By creating videos on YouTube that seem to directly reveal moments in their private lives even before they were so widely recognized, Gomez and Lovato were able to promote themselves as ordinary girls, while also promoting their sitcoms (*Wizards of Waverly Place* and *Sonny with a Chance*), family film roles, and Disney Channel. Since then Gomez and Lovato have each embraced Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr as additional ways to communicate with fans. Thus, Gomez and Lovato can represent the commercial, celebrity extension of what Banet-Weiser calls the self-branded girl, who is "encouraged to be self-reliant and empowered, especially within consumer culture," as she takes up her position as an ideal neoliberal subject—one who not only authorizes, but can, to some degree, mediate the consumption of herself as a cultural product ("Branding" 283).

Gomez's engagement with social media sites and technologies also led her to an investment opportunity that secured her place within the discursive realm of the mogul. As Harris argues:

> the can-do qualities of being smart, having power, and making the most of one's abilities and opportunities have become folded into economic self-made success . . .. Business ventures are no longer the province of the lucky, the well-funded, or old men. It is ordinary, determined young women who are the contemporary exemplars of the successful, modern-day entrepreneur. (*Future* 76-77)

While so-called "ordinary" can-do girls are more visible as entrepreneurs in the neoliberal U.S. than ever before, celebrity girls such as Selena Gomez, whose resources and branding acumen outweigh that of most people, may be particularly well-suited to such visibility. In November 2011, Gomez invested $750,000 in a Los Angeles start-up company to create a photo-sharing app called Postcard on the Run. According to *Forbes*, Gomez is "an active investor" who has helped CEO Josh Brooks understand his app "from a 19-year-old's perspective" (Gomez qtd. in Casserly "Selena" 84). The app turns cell phone photographs into physical postcards, charging users per card (99 cents or more), and Gomez claims she invested in it "because [she] really felt it had meaning" (qtd. in Casserly "Selena" 84). She reportedly has "over 700 photos on her iPhone" and feels that "there's something really magical about holding a photo in your hands" (qtd. in Casserly "Selena" 84). Gomez boosted the app's visibility with a single comment on her Facebook page that resulted in 20,000 downloads of the app within 24 hours (Gannes). She has been called "entrepreneur," "movie mogul," and "mini-mogul" since as early as 2008 (Naughton; "Gomez Forms"; "Selena Gomez is"; Aminosharei 163). Her work as a performer and producer becomes intertwined with efforts to promote

seemingly unrelated social media technologies, products, and services—both those she uses regularly, like Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook, and those she has invested in, like Postcard on the Run. These technologies rely, at least in part, on her continued celebrity and visibility in the realms of television, film, and music and/or her continued financial support. More simply, her media production anchors relations between her celebrity brand and the consumer market.

Yet, *Forbes* magazine's coverage of Gomez's work with Postcard on the Run does not frame her involvement in relation to the many other endeavors that have made her investments possible. Instead her work is repeatedly constructed in relation to Justin Bieber's emergence as a venture capitalist, because, at the time, the two were romantically involved. (Meanwhile a separate *Forbes* cover story devoted to Bieber makes only a single, parenthetical mention of Gomez or his relationship with her [Greenburg 68-76].) The *Forbes* article about Gomez, available online in May 2012, but not included in the June print issue, consistently invokes the über-famous Bieber and from the outset defines Gomez in relation to him. Her headline reads "Bieber Gal Pal, Selena Gomez, Active Tech Investor" (Casserly "Bieber Gal Pal"). I have mixed feelings about the insertion of "Active" to modify what seems an inactive role—here, she is an "investor," not a producer. But, as I have mentioned above, she does reveal her work as a consultant for the company, and she has proven herself a useful asset as also a member of its young demographic of consumers. In contrast, the June cover story defines Bieber as a "Venture Capitalist," suggesting a greater degree of control or more extensive interest in investing. The Gomez article also quotes that story at length,

framing Gomez's passion for the projects she supports as something she shares with (or perhaps learned from) Bieber. Beyond *Forbes*, other articles refer to her "following in his footsteps" when she developed her fragrance, though crowd-sourcing for scent development was unique to Gomez at the time. Bieber had launched his fragrance for women, "Someday," in May 2011, followed a year later by another called "Girlfriend." In September 2011, even before her Postcard on the Run investment, Gomez began developing her first signature fragrance by soliciting fan input online regarding its possible ingredients. "I'm going to put up all the [notes] I like and let my fans pick which ones they want to put together" (Gomez qtd. in Naughton 8). Bieber's fragrance development appears to have been a matter of routine merchandizing, while in comparison Gomez's approach is uniquely interactive.

Prior to her Postcard on the Run project, Gomez had partnered with Kmart, Adjmi Apparel (New York), and fashion designers Tony Melillo and Sandra Campos to produce and market her teen fashion line called Dream Out Loud, which launched just a few days after the first *D-Signed* tween fashion line launched at Target for the back-to-school retail season in 2010. Using similar rhetoric to that employed by Lovato and Disney Consumer Products personnel to promote the *D-Signed* fashion line, Gomez comments regarding Dream Out Loud that she "wanted to make a line that my fans could dress up or down that was still comfortable and affordable" (qtd. in Naughton 8). Gomez also expresses environmental concerns referring to the use of eco-friendly, organic fabrics as "superimportant," and reveals that she's "just looking to send a good message" by including "some of [her] inspirational quotes on [the tags]" (qtd. in Kaplan

12). Both the crowd-sourced fragrance and the fan-inspired fashion line function as relationship branding strategies and modes of communication between Gomez and her fans. Clearly, Gomez is forging new ground for girls and celebrity entrepreneurs, but in the 2012 *Forbes* piece her efforts remain diminished in the face of Bieber's success, and she is constructed in the heteronormative role of girlfriend (i.e. potential future wife) and not as a star in her own right.

The fact that Bieber sits near the top of the *Forbes* "100 Most Powerful Celebrities" list at #3, based on his net worth and media visibility, while Gomez didn't make the list, may further attest to the obstacles set before girls in a male-dominated culture. Since girl-focused media continue to be seen as feminine—and perhaps doubly infantilized because of both that and its ghetto-ization as children's media—it continues to be promoted and distributed in keeping with the idea that it may potentially alienate some lucrative (read stereotypically masculine, boy) audiences. The feminization of girls' media can limit girls' visibility as well as limit their accumulation of wealth relative to successful male performers. And it is worth noting that neither the Jonas brothers nor any other recent Disney Channel stars appear on the *Forbes* list, with the possible exception of former Mouseketeer (1993-1996) Britney Spears who ranks high at #6 due, according to *Forbes*, to her recent engagement which "kept her in the news" (Pomerantz "The Celebrity 100" 86). Disney Channel stars, whether girl- or boy-identified are constrained to some degree by the feminization inherent to their presence in Disney children's media and relative to the company's ethos of childlike innocence. I do not mean to advocate for or against girls' accumulation of wealth or visibility, here.

Rather, part of my project has been to tease out the tensions between girls' visibility, celebrity branding logics, the Disney Company, and media industries more generally.

In spite of the sexist nature of *Forbes'* reporting about Gomez's entry into the adult- and male-dominated spheres of business investments and commercial media production, her invocation there as girl and mogul may ultimately legitimate her brand across market segments. Though her celebrity, at least according to *Forbes*, remains underpowered, her small business investment is deemed worthy of mention and worthy of a "sexy and sophisticated" photo shoot, and suggests some interest in envisioning her as a savvy business woman and potential mogul, or as Bieber is called, perhaps a "mogul-in-training." Gomez's move to invest in social media can complicate notions of who produces and profits from such endeavors, and, perhaps in part because of that, it is rarely discussed. It certainly is not the focus of the *Elle* cover story that followed the *Forbes* piece one month later, which, as I have discussed in Chapter two, devotes its copy space to fashion, film, and a narrativization of Gomez's rise to stardom that perpetuates a sort of "American Dream" mythos of mobility in which her Mexican heritage becomes her ticket out of small-town Texas. Her own self-mythologizing may allow, however, for the larger celebrity narrative to overshadow, absorb, and perhaps normalize Gomez's business interests. In the *Elle* interview, she recalls growing up poor and credits her family with keeping her grounded in reality. Gomez considers herself a role model and a representative for Latina/o youth. By recalling her poor childhood while promoting her star image and advancing her entrepreneurial career, she can easily represent the neoliberal dream of parlaying hard work and talent into financial gain

across multiple public spheres. As I suggest in Chapter two, Gomez uses this narrative of her rise to fame to normalize her ethnic and racial difference, while also recognizing that her success may be *reliant* upon those identifying factors—dependent on *not* being one of those blonde, blue-eyed idols of her childhood.

Raven-Symoné: From "Cool Chick" to Mogul

Like Gomez, Raven-Symoné also has had to contend with the discursive and identificatory constraints of racial and ethnic difference as she navigates her career as a young, female public figure and entertainer. A 2004 newspaper article by Amy Cooper for the *Sydney Sun-Herald* and circulated internationally online categorizes various teen girl stars according to vague character traits, like being funny, cool, or bad, in order to organize the deluge of "teen queens" or "mini-millionaires" that "keep coming" (Cooper 12). She dubs *Lizzie McGuire* star Hilary Duff "The Girl Next Door," because she is "wholesome" and "clean-living" as a result of being too busy with her show to party. In comparison, Raven-Symoné is dubbed "The Cool Chick," seemingly only based on the fact that she sings the theme song for her show and is linked to Lindsay Lohan because they once shared an apartment. Tellingly, Raven-Symoné is not categorized here as a girl next door alongside wholesome Duff, but neither is she "bad" like Lohan, who is referred to as "The Bad Girl." The contemporary discourse of color-blindness, however, creates a barrier to open public discussion of what exactly makes Raven-Symoné "cool."

"Coolness" has long been associated with American Blackness. Black music cultures and fashion styles have been particularly influential to Western mainstream popular cultures. Yet, in the postrace neoliberal context, they have come to be

understood also as embodiments of mainstream culture. bell hooks writes that hip-hop culture is mainstream, because it imitates "dominator desire" rather than being a "rearticulation" or "radical alternative" as many have argued ("Forever" 78). Similarly, Dayo Olopade describes how Black styles of dress since the 1990s have "reflected an ethics of consumption geared not at opposition but at mainstreaming—melding Black difference with majority mores" ("The Hipster" 43). Elements of "Black cool," as Rebecca Walker refers to it, are increasingly mainstreamed and, in the process, may become divorced from their Black or African cultural heritage. Still, it remains difficult to articulate what makes Raven-Symoné "cool" without, then, calling attention to her Blackness and potentially essentializing her as a representative of a monolithic Black culture. And in the context of Western colorblind racial ideology, attention to race is easily avoided since any attention to race might result in the realization of continued institutionalized racial inequality. Returning to the article mentioned above, it is also interesting that Symoné does not qualify as "The Funny Girl," though her comedic work had been compared to that of Lucille Ball more than once.[88] The "Funny Girl" label was instead reserved for Amanda Bynes, star of Nickelodeon's *All That* (1994-2005). While elsewhere Symoné is referred to as "refreshingly normal" or "surprisingly down-to-earth," here she is too "cool"—and/or too Black—to be recognized as quintessentially "funny" (as in, the funniest of all the girls mentioned) or "bad" (as in, prematurely sexual or sexualized) or as the "girl next door" (the conventional ideal).

In the rare instance in which the phrase is used to describe Symoné, she is

[88] See Couric, Hiltbrand, Huff, MacNielle, McMullen, and Samuels.

envisioned as crafting an every-girl image of herself. One journalist refers to Symoné's "shrewd sense of her girl-next-door appeal," which manifests in her comments that she loves comfort foods (cheese grits, specifically) and wears a weave "to make [her] hair look right and [she doesn't] always look glamorous" (Samuels). Here, she is relatable because she is down-to-earth and seems genuine rather than superficial. Yet, Symoné's efforts to inform audiences both that she eats, rather than dieting to be a size two, and that she wears a weave, rather than allowing the weave to be construed as possibly her actual hair, also work as strategies of resistance to dominant White-supremecist ideals of youthful femininity, if not to the girl next door trope itself. These efforts distinguish her from Disney's other celebrity girls.

Throughout her entertainment career, Symoné has attempted to avoid the acting roles and publicity that can perpetuate sexualized representations of her body, and she also has used public attention to her body as an opening to speak out against girls' low self-esteem, weight obsessions, and poor body image. bell hooks argues that Black women's bodies have been and continue to be represented as expendable commodities, such that "the black female body gains attention only when it is synonymous with accessibility, availability, when it is sexually deviant" (hooks *Black Looks* 66). While avoiding sexualization seems like it would allow Symoné to be understood as an appropriately feminine "girl next door" type, she remains marginalized, as I have argued elsewhere, as always/already grown-up when she debuts on Disney Channel and too "cool" to be symbolic of the every-girl. Describing how a particular episode of *That's So Raven* allowed Symoné to demonstrate her particular value to the series and to Disney

Channel as "not a size 2" (qtd. in Samuels), Adam Bonnett, Senior Vice President of Original Programming, had this to say:

> We needed Raven to pull that off. No other actor could have done it. Teenage girls are usually so self-conscious about the way they look. They aren't willing to do anything that would be embarrassing. We love Raven because she is so confident she will go out and slip on a banana peel and think nothing of it. (qtd. in Cole 62)

Here, Bonnett uses Symoné's physical difference along side her "willingness to do anything" to demonstrate why the network values her–what makes her special, or, I would argue, especially exploitable. If images of Black women have symbolized sexual availability in White-supremecist culture, they also have constituted "the antithesis of femininity" (Morrison 85). Symoné apparently has succeeded as a result of reacting differently to ideals of femininity—by being less of a teenage girl, according to Bonnett's assessment. She upholds girl-next-door ideals of femininity by adhering to idealized beauty conventions, and she also resists them by speaking out about what that adherence entails.

Symoné has described herself at times as physically different from other young female stars, such as when she told one journalist, "I am sooo thicky-thick . . . I'm not your normal girl that you see on television . . . I'm not 95 pounds. I like to eat" (Thompson "Raven wonders"). She also has cultivated her star image particularly in relation to Black audiences through her work with other Black performers and her role in the Lifetime original movie, *For One Night* (2006),[89] for which she was awarded an

[89] *For One Night* debuted on Lifetime in February 2005. It was based on the true story of a girl in Georgia who tried to end her school's practice of segregating the prom. Raven-Symoné said she took the role to show people

NAACP Image Award. In addition, she appears in popular publications catering to Black subscribers like *Jet* and *Ebony* and on Black Entertainment Television (BET), including on programs like the Black Girls Rock Awards, the BET Comedy Awards, and the music-focused talk show *106 & Park*. Notably, she has both presented and received awards at the annual Black Girls Rock Awards (est. 2006), earning the "Young, Gifted, and Black" trophy in 2010.[90] While she holds a respected place in these arenas of commercial media for Black audiences, the normalizing power of her fame is limited by the ways in which Blackness and U.S. ideals of femininity intersect. The markers of her ethnic and racial difference, then, including the work she does to define herself as Black, may keep that wholesome label of stereotypical young femininity at bay while securing her in that vaguely defined "cool" category.

Arguably, Raven-Symoné's lack of access to discourses that may allow certain bodies of color to be understood as conventionally, appropriately feminine may lay a foundation for constructing her as a serious contender in that male-dominated sphere of entertainment business. In interviews, she regularly lays out her career interests and speculates on her future work. She has repeatedly pledged that she plans to attend culinary school and would like to own a restaurant if her entertainment career wanes. She revealed to a writer for the *Richmond Times Dispatch* in 2005 that:

> "I do have a dream. I have a five-year plan, I have a ten-year plan. The five-year plan is coming through as we speak. I don't want to jinx it." But, she added, it

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she was not in the business to make money, but instead to make a difference (Hiltbrand "So Raven").

[90] Black Girls Rock is a "non-profit youth empowerment and mentoring organization established to promote the arts for young women of color, as well as to encourage dialogue and analysis of the ways women of color are portrayed in the media" (BlackGirlsRock.com, est. 2006). (Surprisingly, I have found no evidence that Symoné has worked with the organization in any other capacity.)

> has to do with a business, creating a Raven-Symoné brand rather than just going with *That's So Raven* products and offshoots. "Something," she said, "to show I can do more than comedy." Something involving restaurants and food, clothing and makeup, TV and movies. (McMullen "This Is Her" D-19)

She remains extremely career-minded and engaged in the industry logics of streamlined and synergistic marketing of the celebrity self. Clearly figured here as a "can-do" girl, Symoné mentions having both a "five-year plan" and a "ten-year plan," but in relation to other comments she has made regarding having "more than one dream to fall back on," her goals also suggest a somewhat boundless, schizophrenic perspective on her future (qtd. in "Upfront & Centered").

Over the past decade, Symoné has also said that she hopes to write and direct films and admires performers who take up those roles. In 2005, she was first credited as a television producer, starring in the fourth season of *That's So Raven* when she was 19. Since then she has been credited as a co-executive producer for the Disney made-for-television movie *The Cheetah Girls 2* (2006), and a producer of a feature film, *College Road Trip* (Walt Disney Pictures 2008), starring in both.[91] In the rare instance that an interviewer asks about her producing work, she has revealed the multiple ways in which she influences the production of the films, made-for-TV movies, and television series in which she participates. Even before being credited as an executive producer, Symoné told one interviewer that she "talked to the producers about her character and has advised them on current teen slang" (Keveny 4D). Producing *That's So Raven*, Symoné "took meetings on special effects, got involved with casting and script notes" and said

[91] She also founded RayBlaize Records with her father in 1996 to record her second album, *Undeniable* (1999).

she “really liked having the input. I'd like to continue in that vein, being the type of producer who works with actors--the liaison between upstairs and downstairs” (“Upfront & Centered”). “She and people around her insist that the executive producer credit on *Cheetah Girls 2* was no vanity plate” (“Disney star tries”). She had this to say about her work on that Disney Original Movie:

> I was able to sit with Ms. Debra Martin Chase and Kenny Ortega and look through the script and give ideas about different character, you know, development. I was able to be in meetings dealing with the wardrobe and the makeup . . .. And if anybody had a problem, I was able to bring it to anyone's attention . . . to rectify the situation. (“Disney star tries”)

And her co-stars recalled her tireless efforts: “I remember Raven having, like, scissors and fabric and cutting something” (Kiely Williams qtd. in “Disney star tries”). “Even on, like, her day off... she shows up . . . She was just behind the camera and telling me . . . ‘look to the right a little bit more’ and helping me out” (Sabrina Bryan qtd. in “Disney star tries”). Formally stepping into this role in Hollywood media production and being recognized as such, Raven-Symoné challenges stereotypical notions of the media producer and the young female actor. Although she appears to have taken up the stereotypically feminine pursuits of working on costumes and being generally helpful, in a historically adult- and male-dominated industry, her perspective(s) as an African-American teen girl and as an experienced performer make her a valuable resource for the production of media for girls.

Yet, Symoné has constructed her career since *That’s So Raven* around the idea that she will try out new acting and production roles whenever possible, and she has allowed her work as a film and television producer and as a recording artist to shape her

star image and to distinguish her from her Disney Channel performances. Symoné presents being an executive producer as a concerted effort to further her career with every project ("Disney star tries"), even to the extent that she has changed her name as her roles have shifted. She explains:

> The reason that I dropped Symoné was . . . I was in *That's So Raven*, and with the age group *That's So Raven* and the Disney Channel connects to, it's hard [for the young viewers] to differentiate who the character is and who the real person who plays it is . . .. It's easier, and people don't know how to spell my name a lot, so Raven's a lot easier to spell. ("Disney star tries")

After becoming a producer, she took back the "Symoné," saying,

> I added Raven-Symoné back to wean the kids back onto, you know, my real name. Also, with my music, I go with Raven-Symoné because I believe with music you can be who you truly are. ("Disney star tries")

She acknowledges the significance of her name to her audiences and her career, as both a symbol that connects her to fans and also as symbolic of her "true" self. Yet, in other interviews she reveals that "my friends and family call me Christina"—her middle name ("Raven Symoné: 'Black Girls Rock'"). As I have discussed in Chapter two, she has long since taken up the project of expressing the distinctions between her "real," authentic, private self and Raven or Raven-Symoné as her put-on, performed, public self. Here, it is interesting that advancing her career as a producer is in part what instigates the need to revert to her "real" name. In addition, she may benefit from unifying her various career paths under a single name and brand—uniting her music performance and recording with her producing and acting work.

That's So Raven was the first original program to last more than three seasons on Disney Channel and, in conjunction with the success of *The Cheetah Girls*, it led to

myriad licensed product lines associated with Raven-Symoné (including a clothing line, video games, school supplies, cosmetics, bedding and an MP3 player) as is now a common franchising strategy for Disney Channel and Disney Consumer Products. Symoné left the merchandising and licensing of her name to the Disney Company, which undoubtedly contributes to the Disney Company's continued interest in working with her. Cyrus and Gomez, in contrast, have successfully launched fashion lines, seemingly independently of Disney, and have taken on sexually sophisticated film roles that may make them less desirable candidates for performing in Disney fare as they also age out of relevance for Disney's young audiences. I would not go so far as to argue, however, that Cyrus or Gomez actively limited Disney's use of their names or likenesses, since they were under contract and worked to promote not only their celebrity brands, but also all things Disney.

Unlike Cyrus and Gomez, Symoné has presented herself as somewhat unconcerned with developing a brand from which she can profit independently of Disney. And nearly every film or television project she has worked on since 2006 has been produced or distributed by an arm of the Disney Company. Symoné has expressed her loyalty to Disney, stating "They've given me all this. I have to give back to them" (Boorstin "Disney's 'Tween Machine'"). Her 2008 feature film, *College Road Trip*, was produced by Walt Disney Studios; Disney-owned network ABC Family aired her made-for-TV movie, *Revenge of the Bridesmaids* in 2010; the 2011-2012 run of comedy series *State of Georgia* was produced by ABC Studios and Disney Enterprises and aired on the Disney-owned ABC network; and she continues to provide the voice for animated pixie

Iridessa in Disney's *Tinker Bell* DVD series (2008-present). In 2006, discussing the success of the *That's So Raven* franchise, Symoné said:

> The list of "Raven"-inspired products Disney merchandising has come up with is unreal—games, board games, sheets, clothes, lunch boxes, fragrance, jewelry. Young fans come up to me and get all worked up because they actually think I'm Raven Baxter. Having been in the business so long, I'm fairly detached from all the hoopla. I know it could all end tomorrow. The more you wrap yourself up in the business and let it become your identity the harder you're going to fall. ("Upfront & Centered")

In this instance, Symoné refrains from adopting the corporate "branding" language of the Disney Company and other Disney talent, suggesting that letting the business become "your identity" will make the seemingly inevitable fall from stardom much harder to handle. Still, the Disney Company continues to profit from her name and likeness, and she also profits from their efforts, earning an undisclosed percentage of the royalties and allowing the franchises and one-off properties in which she participates to create relationships between consumers and her celebrity brand.

Having come to fame prior to celebrities' reliance on online social media networks, such as Twitter (2006), YouTube (2005), and Facebook (2004), for branding, Raven-Symoné employs self-branding practices that are somewhat distinct from those of Cyrus and Gomez. Though she appears exponentially less frequently in trades, tabloids, and popular magazines (both during and since her recurring roles on Disney Channel), she, too, has been addressed in popular press as a mogul and "mini-mogul" throughout her career. Host Rocsi (Raquel Roxanne Diaz) of BET's hip-hop focused program, *106 & Park*, introduced Symoné as "a multi-millionaire and mini-mogul" in 2010 ("Raven Symoné: Black Girls Rock"). And when Symoné was featured on the cover of *Ebony*

magazine's "Annual Women's Issue" in 2007, the headline read, "The $400 Million Woman: Raven-Symoné, All Grown Up & Flexing Her Brand." Brian Warner, reporting for CelebrityNetWorth.com later disputed claims that Symoné's brand could be valued at $400million, explaining that that figure represents the estimated total sales of all licensed merchandise for the Disney franchise. Symoné's net worth, calculated by the folks at *Forbes*, came out to just $45 million and ranked her at #584 in the magazine's list of the wealthiest celebrities of 2009. Her construction as a mogul, then, seems to have been confined to media targeting audiences of color. Symoné does not have an official personal website, though there are several fan-run sites devoted to her. She has not invested in creating an online presence to promote her brand and has worked for many years to remain out of view of paparazzi, which makes her much less visible than others in her Disney cohort. In particular, her self-branding efforts may be understood as less successful relative to the brand development and fan following Cyrus, Gomez, and others have generated on YouTube, Facebook, and their websites.

One of her brand expansion initiatives included developing a series of how-to videos. In 2008, Symoné starred in a series of videos meant to show girls time-saving tips and DIY crafts. The *Raven-Symoné Presents* series was meant for distribution on the now-defunct website RavenSymonéPresents.com and ultimately on DVD from Gurney Productions. But the series was short-lived and found only a small audience. (As of June 2013, Amazon.com did have in stock at least one copy of the DVD, dated 2004.) The Raven-SymonéPresents.com domain name has become the name of her YouTube channel, and the 15 videos are available there, the last one having been posted four years

ago. The videos include tutorials on how to polish silver jewelry, how to whiten sneakers, how to make a fuzzy pen, how to make a fancy dog collar, and how to make a homemade hair mask—a variety of simple crafts and projects that can be done with items available in many households. Her DIY approach to addressing a girl audience with the videos is reminiscent of the "girl power" ethos of the riot grrrl movement and "Third Wave" feminism in the 1990s, which encouraged girls to create their own zines, music, videos, films, beauty products, and clothing and spurred a resurgence of crafting among girls and young women that continued throughout the early 2000s.

Symoné's distinctly domestic and feminine projects may lack relevance for her somewhat undefined girl audience. The projects seem aimed at affluent and bored teens, most requiring a glue gun and free time to complete, some requiring products to clean or enhance. But they might appeal neither to girls who crave the flash and spectacle of Disney celebrity media nor to girls who share Symoné's DIY drive and aim to subvert consumer culture through crafting. It is possible, too, that her previous efforts to promote stereotypes of femininity via consumption and a focus on upholding beauty conventions might counteract her attempt at subverting consumer girls' culture. For instance, in 2005 she and Disney partnered with boom! and Townley Cosmetics to create a *That's So Raven* beauty line. Symoné was featured on the packaging, instructing "girls about the best way to apply make-up so that it looks natural and doesn't freak their parents out" (qtd. in "Disney and Raven-Symoné"). Although the cosmetics were not marketed solely to a Black consumer-base, Symoné's pedagogical function on the packaging positions her firmly within the apparatus of Western, White-privileging

beauty conventions as she teaches White and non-White girls alike how to make her glittering pale pink and coral lip glosses and shimmering gold eye shadows "look natural." The dichotomy she creates, between freaking out girls' parents and applying make-up correctly to look natural, also calls to mind the origins of the term "freaky," which, according to Patricia Hill Collins, "initially invoked a sexual promiscuity associated with Blackness" (121). Navigating the sexualization of race as celebrities and public citizens is particularly complicated for Black women and girls, whose bodies do not conform to the Aryan ideals that structure gendered beauty conventions in Western cultures and increasingly globally. Symoné's negotiation between Black "freaky" hypersexualization and White ideals of feminine beauty, here, demonstrates the way in which "White Western normality [is] constructed on the backs of Black deviance" (Collins 120). Symoné's commitment to beauty norms and an image of non-threatening Blackness, thus, makes her an appropriate role model for supposedly pre-sexual tween girls—in the eyes of protective parents/guardians, as well as in the view of the sanitized, often-colorblind Disney Company. While Symoné's simultaneous investment in modeling appropriate femininity for girls seems like an easy fit in the context of the postfeminist cultural obsession with visibility, celebrity, and the commodification of girls' bodies and feminine performances, her lack of powerful online self-branding efforts beyond Disney's licensing of her image may have kept her from reaching the sizeable young audiences found by Cyrus, Gomez, and others since.

CONCLUSION

The "do-good" turn among U.S. television networks and producers and the growing importance of corporate responsibility across U.S. industries, including for media conglomerates, throughout the 2000s, coincided with the extraordinary popularity of tween-girl centered Disney Channel franchises. The first of these franchises was *Lizzie McGuire*, and from there, the possibilities for franchise diversification and longevity grew with *That's So Raven*. The success of these increasingly expansive franchises exploded in 2006 with the premier of *Hannah Montana*. By 2009, girl-driven franchises like *Wizards of Waverly Place* had become a significant source of income and publicity for Disney, in large part due to the self-branding efforts of star Selena Gomez as well as to the previous successes of Hilary Duff, Raven-Symoné, and Miley Cyrus and their affiliated franchises.

In recent years, the Walt Disney Company has increasingly interwoven corporate responsibility and citizenship initiatives into its company discourse as well as the franchises driven by its young, female Disney Channel talent and their audiences, the publicization of which functions as relationship branding for the network. Cyrus and Gomez, in particular, have enacted the rhetoric of corporate citizenship during their respective tenures on Disney Channel, inviting fans to pledge allegiance to Disney's campaigns and, by extension, to align themselves with the transmedia franchises these stars represent. Soon after her departure from Disney Channel, Cyrus continued to espouse the rhetoric of celebrity-brand activism, though more recently her promotional efforts have revolved around her romantic life, her break from Disney, and her music

career. Gomez has more aggressively adapted Disney's brand strategies and its altruistic, somewhat apolitical corporate citizenship rhetoric, incorporating commodity activism into her celebrity brand since moving on to less Disney-fied acting roles.

Raven-Symoné may be the most subversive of the three, having avoided being inculcated by Disney's apolitical environmentalist initiatives, as Cyrus, Gomez, and others have been. Yet, Symoné continues to work on Disney media projects as the most Disney-loyal of these three stars. Since leaving Disney Channel, Symoné has also invested time in projects that encourage and support girls, independently of her Disney work. Although her civic participation has a feminist bent, she continues to promote herself as uncontroversial. The increase in commodity activism meant to "empower" girls since the commercial appropriation of "girl power" rhetoric in the 1990s, seems to have made it easier in recent years for celebrities like Symoné to remain somewhat apolitical while supporting such efforts. Representing massive corporations, such as Dove and Merck, Symoné has worked directly with girls, encouraging them to accept and appreciate their bodies, but, by working with commercial sponsors, she may also be encouraging girls to connect body acceptance with consumerism, á la postfeminism, while perpetuating neoliberal discourses that individualize the systemic and institutional inequalities that organize U.S. society. In addition, her efforts to model appropriate ways of performing femininity through dress, make-up application, hair maintenance, and behavior may constrain the subversive, feminist potential of her activism.

Each of these three Disney Channel performers has presented herself as a public citizen, through engagement with activist and philanthropic causes and through self-

branding and promotional efforts that have propelled them into public view and that exploit forms of responsible citizenship for visibility. Each has been invoked in male-dominated spheres of business and civic participation that may open up contemporary constructions of girlhood and allow for girls to be discussed as leaders, as virtuosos, and as moguls, while also complicating notions of adulthood. Reliance on the recognition of capitalist, patriarchal institutions for legitimacy, however, may have contradictory discursive, cultural, and economic consequences. Legitimating celebrity girlhood in these ways perpetuates visibility—and the body maintenance and appeals to conventional, postfeminist femininity that it entails—as a primary site of identification and agency for girls and women. Girls' participation in business, as investors, as media producers, and as paid consultants and spokespeople may perpetuate individualist, patriarchal, capitalist systems and discourse. Yet, girls' presence in these arenas also may precipitate a shift not only in constructions of girlhood but also in the sexist and ageist discourses of business and public life. Envisioning girls as public citizens and business moguls means acknowledging their economic value, their autonomy, their cultural prominence, and the market power, as well as the potential political significance, of the girl audiences and consumers that have made them successful.

Conclusion

Over the past few years since I originally embarked on this research, the Disney Company has actively marketed certain qualities and pursuits of Disney Channel characters to guide franchise diversification, using lifestyle branding and star images. In this way, the conglomerate has streamlined its corporate citizenship efforts as well as created new outlets for the exploitation and promotion of Disney Channel talent. For example, Bella Thorne and Zendaya play professional dancers on *Shake It Up*, and, as I discuss in Chapter three, their characters became the impetus for developing and marketing a line of Disney-inspired active-wear for girls. In addition, this particular character-driven franchise has also been used to promote an affiliated line of pre-packaged foods, marketed to parents as healthier lunch options for their kids, as well as to promote a line of dance-related interactive video games. Furthermore, the popularity of the show and its paratexts may have been what compelled producers to make a dance competition one of the central events of the 2011 Friends for Change Games. The characters' "active lifestyle" is easily conflated with the busy lives of the shows' stars, making them also a great fit for promoting First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! Campaign, in which Obama appears in PSAs and Disney Channel programming bumpers exercising and dancing with Disney stars and other children, while encouraging audience members to join them. Disney's lifestyle marketing and relationship branding techniques are not applied exclusively to girl consumer audiences, nor do they exclusively employ girl performers.

As I argue in Chapter one, the incitement to perform or "shine" overwhelms contemporary girls' consumer culture, and the latest iterations of Disney's girl-focused franchises are no exception. *Shake It Up*'s girl protagonists are constantly performing. Their portrayals of working-class, urban girlhoods of different ethnicities allow for a racially diverse cast of performers to "shine," creating a sense of authenticity that would be difficult to render with an all-White cast in which middle-class privilege could be assumed and may not allow for the girls' shared dream of upward mobility. As Sarah E. Turner has argued,

> While the girls are not impoverished, they belong to a working middle class America and share the dream of social and financial mobility . . .. What seems to bond them together then is their desire to succeed, and that desire works to negate any differences based on race; instead of being two friends, one of whom is black and the other white, they are seen as the personification of the American Dream's melting pot, where everyone has the ability to better herself. (131)

As I have argued in Chapter two regarding other programs, Disney Channel's girl-focused series deploy racial and ethnic differences in efforts to authenticate their characters, their narratives, and their environs. In this more recent case, the performative girlhoods of *Shake It Up*—performed by girls who dance on a dance-focused television program within the program—create multiple outlets for consumption and performance on the part of its audiences and stars. This representation of performative girlhood has become a site through which Disney locates its politics of healthy living and corporate citizenship (described in Chapter four) squarely on the shoulders of tween girls.

Yet, even before the *Shake It Up* dancers had their faces plastered on pre-packaged Caesar salads, Hannah Montana graced a package of red cherries from the

"Disney Garden." Entertainment news sources, gossip blogs, and cultural commentators immediately pointed out the sexually suggestive nature of the choice to use Disney Channel's most popular adolescent girl to advertise red cherries—especially on the heels of the pole-dancing incident in which many found Cyrus' use of a dance pole during her performance at the Teen Choice Awards inappropriately provocative for the sixteen-year-old and her young audience (JayBird). Some questioned the "innocence" of the combination of this fruit with that *Hannah Montana: The Movie* label, wondering whether or not it was purely a coincidental pairing. Although perhaps unlucky, the choice is less than surprising in the context of the somewhat dehumanizing corporate discourse around girls and girl culture that circulates among Disney executives. That discourse, sometimes insensitive to cultural contexts, also relies on the exploitation of "girl as affect," as it is discussed in Chapter three (Swindle). The Hannah Montana cherries are another example of the affective labor of both the image of the girl and of actual girls, since the image is meant to attract girls' and parents' attention, making them feel and act in a particular way. Girls are meant to influence the adults near them to purchase the fruit with Hannah's face on it. Parents/guardians are meant to appreciate the opportunity to please and nourish their girl-identified children by purchasing a healthy snack. Grocery produce becomes another of Disney's technologies that can "garner and shape attention for profit" using girls' affective labor (Swindle). In addition to the promotional gains made by locating character images and movie titles on a wide variety of produce, Disney also earns royalties on units sold.

The Hannah Montana cherries were the result of a company-wide move to market upcoming Disney movies and programs in association with healthier foods, to replace gains made previously by Disney advertising on McDonald's Happy Meals. Beginning in 2006, Disney had "rebranded the act of marketing its movies to hungry children as 'corporate social responsibility'" by partnering with growers to market 250 items in the Disney Garden line, available across 18 of the 20 major grocery retailers in the U.S. (McDevitt). By 2012, Disney had banned all junk food advertising within its programming and was influencing Nickelodeon and Discovery Kids networks to follow suit. Yet, among all the celebration of Disney's announcement, including words of thanks from First Lady Michelle Obama, others debated the ways in which Disney's new health-conscious brand strategies miss the mark when it comes to changing the culture for the better.

An op-ed by Kimi Harris for Fobes.com points out that the commercials that will replace those junk food ads will still be produced by large corporations that can afford to pay for the time—not small organic farms whose local sales could help to decrease the industrial "footprint" and reliance on chemicals by massive distribution from larger farms (Harris). In addition, Disney's expansion of advertising efforts into produce aisles at grocery stores, where many children spend time with parents or guardians, means that the "nag factor"[92] continues to implicate younger and younger children in marketing for major conglomerates. It does nothing to alter advertiser influences, but instead posits

[92] Lance Gatewood, vice president of Disney Consumer Products' Food, Health, and Beauty, North American division says Disney's produce marketing "can't help but benefit from the nag factor. When kids are begging their parents for something nutritious, like an avocado, he explains, it's hard to say no" (qtd. in McDevitt).

Disney as one of the few "good" companies advertising "good" products, allowing the wholesome Disney ethos to further permeate food culture, commodifying parent-child interactions and everyday decisions about food as part of "lifestyle" consumerism.

As the trend continues, I am compelled to question when Disney's reach into everyday life might end, if ever. These tactics are not unique to the Disney Company, and the Disney Company does not employ them only within the context of girl stars or girl consumer audiences. But it is the conglomerate's increasing reliance on images of girlhood and the affective labor of girls that advances these campaigns and related merchandizing. In a sense, then, the pre-packaged *Shake It Up*-related Caesar salad being marketed to girls can represent an even more comprehensive effort at the branding of girlhood via Disney Channel series than was found with the development of the *D-Signed* collections or with the intensive licensing of merchandise for the *That's So Raven* or *Hannah Montana* franchises.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD(S)

An extended exploration of girls' visibility as Disney target markets, producers, and performers, this dissertation brings several disciplines into conversation with one another, addressing issues in girls' cultural studies, media industries scholarship, celebrity studies, and theories of postfeminism. In order to productively engage with the literature of each of these fields throughout the project, I have worked to combine methodologies in ways that complicate accepted theories and discourses. First, this dissertation foregrounds texts and identities often marginalized in media industries

scholarship and media criticism. Children's television and girl performers and audiences, in particular, are under-researched, and although there is a considerable amount of scholarship regarding the Walt Disney Company and Disney texts, much of it focuses on Disney's animated feature films, theme park operations, and corporate history. My mixed methodologies approach, then, is most useful in clarifying how and why Disney Channel and related divisions have targeted girls in recent years and how girl performers and girl audiences function in the economic strategies of the company.

Second, this dissertation aims to expand the critical theoretical work necessary for understanding girls' culture(s) and for the continued theorization of discursive constructions of girlhood in under-theorized sites of girls' media culture. Mixing media industries research with discursive textual analysis has allowed me to illuminate discourses of girlhood that continue to circulate in popular U.S. culture, inflected by Disney's profit motives and politics. While Disney Channel's girl-driven franchises have constituted my case studies, the analysis reaches beyond the clear focus on gender and age to theorize girls' increasing visibility in the context of contemporary consumer culture and issues of postracism, citizenship, subjectification, and agency—issues that require continued interrogation as Disney distributes and expands its franchise properties globally.

Third, this project works toward more clearly defined attention to girls and girlhoods within contemporary theorizations of postfeminist discourse. Although such scholars as Angela McRobbie, Diane Negra, Yvonne Tasker, and Rosalind Gill have theorized postfeminism in indispensable ways, their assessments privilege women and

womanhood, in some instances neglecting to theorize the particular role of girls and age within postfeminist discourse. As such, more scholarship regarding postfeminist media culture needs to examine the influence(s) of visibility and celebrity on contemporary notions of girlhood, as I have worked to do with this project. I argue that the Walt Disney Company has a vested interest in reproducing certain postfeminist and subjectifying discourses of girlhood, which have become integral to its success in an ever-expanding web of media and consumer markets. Finally, the field of celebrity studies has not focused much attention on girls' performances of girlhood in popular media, although there is increasing attention to girls' celebrity aspirations in girls' studies. With this project, then, I aim also to extend celebrity studies to incorporate an understanding of girls as stars and media celebrities, as well as an understanding of girls' cultural implications as aspirational figures.

LIMITATIONS AND POSSIBILITIES FOR RELATED FUTURE RESEARCH

The three Disney Channel series featured most prominently throughout this dissertation have ceased airing new episodes (save for a recent reunion episode of *Wizards of Waverly Place* in April 2013). In turn, their girl stars have disentangled themselves, to varying degrees, from Disney Channel and Disney subsidiaries to develop product lines, record music, act in other series and films, and to produce films and invest in tech start-ups. But Disney's nationwide casting tours and audition calls have yielded younger stars to take their places in the Disney Channel primetime line-up. Shows like *Good Luck Charlie*, *Shake It Up*, *A.N.T. Farm*, and *Jessie* bring attention to new

representations of girlhood that look and sound much like their recent predecessors. Also like the shows before them, they are platforms from which Disney can launch transmedia franchises, while their girl stars launch celebrity brands and careers as multi-hyphenate performers. Their respective stars, Bridget Mendler, Bella Thorne, Zendaya, China Ann McClain, and Debbie Ryan, have each embarked on recording careers, promoted *D-Signed* fashion lines, and lent their voices to Walt Disney Records and/or Radio Disney.

Selena Gomez has herself acknowledged Disney's machinations when it comes to creating stars, but her recollections of her time on Disney Channel are couched in the rhetoric of personal choice symptomatic of contemporary neoliberalism and postfeminism. She explains:

> Disney is a machine, so people automatically assume that you can't work for the channel unless you act and sing and dance and sign up for all that. That's absolutely not true. I always did everything the way I wanted to do it. I decided to make music when I was ready. My fashion line was next, and I found who I wanted to partner with. (qtd. in Aminosharei 167)

To be sure, not every person who performs on Disney Channel also sings and dances. But the assumption is clear in Gomez's explanation that rather than choosing whether or not to pursue the avenues opened to her by her role at the network, instead it was up to her to decide *when* to make music and *with whom* to create a fashion line. Her successes are ostensibly evidence, then, of her good decisions and great timing. But they are also the result of demands and expectations on the part of the Disney Company. And as I have shown in Chapter three, developments like the character-based *D-Signed* fashion collections allow the Disney Company—more easily than ever—to market girl-centered

franchises regardless of whether or not the star is a willing and active participant in every sphere of its operations.

Disney is a star machine in the U.S. But what might its nurturing of girl stars and girl-centered products and texts mean for girls outside the U.S.? Inquiries into the international and transnational flows of Disney Channel content would take this research in a productive direction beyond the scope of U.S. culture and industry strategies. Disney Channels Worldwide recently announced entry into the German television market planned for 2014, at which time it will provide free content from U.S.-based Disney Channel and films from the Disney library. Some speculate that the launch is motivated by low sales of Disney merchandise in that country ("Disney will launch"). Disney's reach extends throughout several European nations, and Disney Channels are available in India and elsewhere in Southeast Asia. As households throughout the Asia-Pacific region convert from analog to digital television, the number of pay-TV households is increasing. Reports suggest that the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, and Vietnam, in particular, are poised for a boost in profit potential when it comes to television due to the growth of pay-TV households ("A new report"). And, although strict regulation of entertainment by the Chinese government will make it difficult for Disney Channel to expand into that market, its film subsidiaries continue to shoot and distribute films there. Disney Channel Asia currently airs throughout Southeast Asia, with several exceptions, and with local advertisements and locally produced content available in certain areas. And Disney

Channel India premiered a locally-produced version of *Shake It Up* in March 2013,[93] illustrating that Disney shows developed in the U.S. are being adapted elsewhere, likely resulting in somewhat different cultural implications.

Scholarship regarding Disney's transnational television operations is limited, and questions remain about the implications of U.S. television content aired and merchandized beyond the U.S. Katalin Lustyik's work regarding Nickelodeon's presence in New Zealand and Australia, for instance, moves beyond notions of "cultural or American imperialism" to analyze the processes of localization necessary for global success in children's television. And Shiri Reznik and Dafna Lemish's, as well as Anne Potter's, studies of the global circulation of Disney's *High School Musical* also would provide useful guides for this line of inquiry (Reznik and Lemish; Potter). Since Disney relies on television outlets and new media to promote other Disney products and productions, it is certainly worth exploring the cultural implications of Disney's global expansion. Further, I have yet to locate scholarship relating global Disney to the symbol of the "global girl," conceptualized by McRobbie as symbolic of the rapid change of globalization in impoverished countries (*The Aftermath*). The figure of the global girl becomes a site of increased attention in contemporary culture and signifies a variety of meanings in developing nations where the Disney Company has a growing presence. Aside from continued study of how images of girlhood function in the Disney empire,

[93] The version of *Shake It Up* created for Indian audiences features two boy protagonists, played by Sparsh Shrivastav and Ojas Godatwar.

studying Disney Channel audiences beyond the U.S. context would be a useful way of complicating arguments about representations of postfeminist girlhoods.

While I work to privilege celebrity girls' voices and representations of girlhood throughout this dissertation, time has not allowed for analysis of girls' reception of Disney Channel programs and use of related merchandise in their everyday lives. Such a study would have been beyond my resources and beyond the scope of the research questions that drive this project. Nevertheless, these limitations raise useful questions that demand further investigation. What could follow from this is a study that explores the complexity and variety of girls' interpretations of and negotiations with these programs and their stars. In addition, while there is more to be said about Disney's reach into the everyday lives of girls, through a variety of methods, further research is also needed into Disney's reach into the everyday lives of people across the boundaries of gender and age suggested by this dissertation's focus on tween girls.

Finally, limits of time and space did not permit thorough investigation of the sample texts in relation to queer theory, which would be useful for further unpacking Disney Channel's gendered constructions of characters and stars. Certainly, the aspects of camp and drag in *Hannah Montana* and *That's So Raven* deserve greater attention. And I would particularly like to pursue a larger study of the trope of the closet in these and other media texts created for and about girls. When do girls' closets become worth mentioning? Where, and how, do they function within girl-focused narratives? While I begin, in Chapter one, to explore what it might mean for Miley to keep Hannah's secret in a vast, mechanized closet, it would likewise be interesting to ask what (or how)

Raven's attic bedroom might signify as not just a closet, but also a space in which she also designs and produces her costumes and clothes.

With regard to *Wizards of Waverly Place*, the final season finds Alex's younger brother Max (played by Jake T. Austin) magically turned into a girl, Maxine (played by Bailee Madison). What ensues in the following several episodes is a series of gender stereotypes and subversions that may speak to gender-queer or trans-identified characterizations. In addition, each of the series discussed in this dissertation features a girl protagonist who has a best girlfriend. Girls' friendships in popular media are woefully under-researched and girls' media and queer media studies might both benefit from their analysis in terms of their homosocial or queer potential. Along those lines, and extending Meenakshi Gigi Durham's exploration of girls' fandom and a "homospectatorial gaze," further analysis of girl fans' relationships to girl stars would illuminate the queer dynamics of girls' fandom and girls' celebrity.

Ultimately, I hope that my research contributes a substantive study of girlhood within Disney Channel franchises, and that it also raises productive new questions, such as those described above, that might lead to further scholarship on this and related topics in girls' cultural studies, celebrity studies, and media studies.

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